

A LEARNING SITUATION

*Views from the National Enrichment and Learning Program in
St. Lucia, Eastern Caribbean*

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Abstract

Adult education has generally held a high profile around the world in the last decade, but in the Caribbean region adult education is still to be seen as a remedial necessity rather than a developmental imperative. Today we are facing a change in the global economy, a major demographic transition, and increased educational demands suited a growing knowledge-based society. To St. Lucia and other small states, these challenges are more pressing than elsewhere.

The Governor General of St. Lucia (Head of State) has recognised the importance of human capital in economic growth, and has therefore made an obligation to direct social and personal development within the wider context of lifelong learning.

What does the St. Lucian Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sport do to accommodate these challenges, and how do they meet the adult learners in their aspiration for basic or continuing education?

This study describes how learners and facilitators¹ interact in courses set by the National Enrichment and Learning Program (NELP). I have gathered empirical data, examined theories and studied NELP's philosophical and conceptual framework, to better understand what I have called "a learning situation". I believe this learning situation to be a micro dimension or a reflection of the society and NELP's position in it, at a personal, theoretical, and practical level. I have therefore used a method from an ethnographic tradition where the empirical evidence is gathered directly from the people in the culture, using various tools of research.

Through my attendance in the learning situation I have managed to gather data through observations, answers to a questionnaire and interviews. Some of the questions I have tried to answer are: How do the learners and facilitators experience their interaction, and do the learners find the teaching approaches to be stimulating?

After three months of fieldwork I have concluded that NELP does not manage to carry out their fundamental thoughts of facilitation into practice. Instead they are combining a didactic- and a facilitative approach of teaching, to fit local conditions in a rapidly changing world.

¹ A facilitator is a "teacher" that facilitates the learners learning.

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1 Introduction and Contextualisation

1.2 Introduction

The people of the Caribbean are mainly descended from Africa, Europe and India. It is a cultural mixture where people live together with a background of slavery and migration. The region has a unique history which is recognised to have a cultural impact on the world today. Even though the Caribbean countries have colonial and post-colonial ties to different European countries and the USA, they have many similarities, not only in their panoramic physical beauty, geological origins and climate, but also in demographic, political, cultural and economic conditions (Mintz 1966).

My curiosity about the Caribbean region started when travelling in Latin America. I busshed down the coast (the Caribbean Sea) of Guatemala and Honduras and on two occasions ended up living in a Garifuna (African descended population) village. I was fascinated by their friendliness, simplicity of living, and their struggle to presser culture and tradition.

A year later, after signing up for the Comparative and International Education program, a growing preoccupation with Latin America and the Caribbean had manifested itself through my reading about education literature. To my surprise, I found a region, or actually a sub-region (the Caribbean) that had an eager understanding of how important education was to the development of people and society. In my further research (term paper 2002) I noticed several Dutch, French, and English postcolonial countries' willingness to participate in different prospective educational projects. At a later stage when reading about these projects I decided to not make it too hard for my self when doing fieldwork. I was therefore looking for an interesting English-speaking country, and in a short period of time St. Lucia distinguished itself.

Many countries of the world today face the challenge of adjusting to the global market; to reverse the deterioration of the environment; and to re-educate a

population to protect themselves against global pandemics like HIV and drug abuse. These challenges are more pressing to small states than to others (Carrington 2002). St. Lucia is one of the states that have gone through big social and economical changes. After the loss of protectionism and preferential treatments, St. Lucia continues to be dependent on financial support from the UK to manage economically. Socially, they have to cater to a low or non-educated ageing population, not suited for a change in workplace; and a growing progressive female population breaking through old traditional patterns. St. Lucia is therefore in a position where they are obligated to provide the declining younger population with quality education, and simultaneously engage and support the remaining population to educate or re-educate them to meet the fast changing domestic conditions.

What does the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sport does to accommodate these challenges, and how do they meet the adult learners in their aspiration for further education?

Educators like Freire (1972) have argued and showed the world that adult education programmes have an impact on people and societies. In the Caribbean region alone there has been gathered sufficient evidence to conclude that adult education has made a difference on how people live, acquire new skills, new jobs, and earn more money (Ellis, Ramsay, & Small 2000). This gives them new perspectives and possibilities through an enhancing self-esteem, and an increasing self-confidence and economic liveability.

To me, learning is the core of what education is about, and the reason is most likely that I have always found “schooling” to be a challenge. But for the last 15 years or so learning has become something more than “schooling”, and with this perspective in mind, learning has become a way of living. Learning may be seen as a tool waiting to be used or a door to be opened. The only problem is that people find it hard to distinguish between the keys, or to utilize the tools in a suitable manner. This is what facilitation is about and the reason why my research objective and questions focus on instruction, experience and interaction between adult learners and facilitators in “a learning situation”.

1.2 Research Objective and Questions

The main objective of this study is to describe "a learning situation" by focusing on the interaction between adult learners and facilitators at the National Enrichment and Learning Program, St. Lucia.

The description will be based on data gathered during interviews, a questionnaire, and observations. I have asked three principal research questions that in turn will be answered in the Outcome chapter:

- *Do the learners find the approaches used by the facilitators stimulating, or unproductive? What kind of approaches do the learners prefer and how have they arrived at this position?*
- *Is the interaction in the classroom a positive experience for the participants? How do the learners and the facilitators interact in the learning situation?*
- *Is there a discrepancy between what the facilitator communicates and how the learners perceive it?*

By interviewing and observing the participants in one academic and one technical course at NELP I have investigated these questions. Further, I have lived in the community and interacted with people with the purpose to develop an understanding of the local prerequisites in order to describe the main objective of this thesis.

1.3 Contextualisation

1.3.1 General geography

The Caribbean is a region that comprises several islands located north of South America, Guyana and Surinam in mainland South-America and Belize in Central-America. The islands vary in size, geography, population composition, language, religion and political organisation. The Caribbean is very much a heterogeneous region, but the islands have a common history that make comparisons natural and obvious² (Mintz 1966). Geologically speaking, some of the islands are volcanic, while others are established on raised ocean floor.

The region consists of the following countries with English as main language (the Commonwealth Caribbean or The English-speaking countries): Belize in Central-America and Guyana in South-America, Anguilla, Antigua, Barbuda, Bahamas Islands, Virgin Islands (St. John, St. Croix and St. Thomas), Carriacou and Little Martinique, Cayman Islands, Dominica, Grenada, Jamaica, Montserrat, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, St. Vincent and the Grenadines, Trinidad and Tobago, the Turks and Caicos.

In addition, you have the French speaking islands Guadeloupe (La Dèsirade, Marie-Galante, Les Saintes), St. Barts, and the french part of St. Martin³, Martinique and Haiti; the Dutch Islands Aruba, Bonaire, Curacao, Sint Eustatius, Saba, and the Dutch part of Sint Maarten. Finally you have the Spanish speaking Islands Puerto Rico (USA), Cuba, and The Dominican Republic.

The Islands are divided in the Larger and the Lesser Antilles, where the Lesser Antilles are divided in the Windward (small islands in the south) and the Leeward Islands (small islands in the north). St. Lucia is often referred to be one of the Windward Islands, but when outside of the region, it is more common to refer to The Eastern Caribbean Region or to be a part of the Commonwealth Caribbean.

² They have an inherited bureaucracy and a modern infrastructure. Most of the countries have one official- and several Creole based languages. They are organised as a matrifocal household, and nearly every family have one or more members abroad.

³ St. Martin has a French part and a Dutch part (Sint Maarten).

In the Larger Antilles there is a population of 27 million, while in the Lesser Antilles the population is only 3 million. Much of the present population is a mix of different ethnic groups and they are often referred to as mulatto, mestizo, or Creole. Mintz (1966) refers to a Caribbean community, even though the region does not consist of one “culture area”, but several.

1.3.2 A brief history of the Caribbean region

The first people to arrive in the Eastern Caribbean islands were wandering Stone Age hunters and gatherers from the Archaic Period. They were called Ciboneys Indians, and they have been present on some islands as early as 4000 BC. Around the year 0 a group of tribes, the Arawaks, migrated from South-America to the Eastern Caribbean region. They were a peaceful, gentle people who hunted, fished and farmed. At around 1200 AD the Caribs invaded (from South-America) the region and migrated northwards. The Caribs were a warring tribe, and they drove off or killed the Arawaks. When Columbus stumbled over East Caribbean at the end of the 15th Century, he discovered evidence of a nearly eradicated ethnic group (the Arawaks) and a hostile people (the Caribs) who ferociously defended their land (Eriksen 1996).

In their pursuit of gold, the Spanish explorers left most of the region around 1600 AD when an abundance of gold was discovered in Mexico. This gave opportunity to the British, the French, the Dutch, and even the Danish colonisers to establish themselves. Some islands, like St. Lucia, have a long history of wars, where the French and the British repeatedly fought for ownership before the British finally succeeded. Later (1700 AD) many European countries fought among themselves for ownership of the islands. However, in 1713 the European countries agreed to make peace, and they divided the Caribbean between them (Eriksen 1996). Most of them started to produce raw materials like indigo, coffee, tobacco, cocoa, salt and sugar. They established large plantations that periodically needed a larger labour supply than was present (Reynolds 2003). Most of the countries solved this problem by shipping millions of African slaves over the Atlantic into agricultural slavery.

The running of the plantations and the slavery lead to a new social order, where the few European white owners controlled a huge area of land and a large amount of slaves. The white owners organised the plantations by dividing slaves with the same

language and cultural background apart, because they believed this would minimize the possibility of a revolt. When doing this, the owners weakened the slaves' original culture and language. But at the same time it was a beginning of a new culture melted together by oppression (Mintz 1966).

There were very few women among the white owners. This leads to what Mintz (1966) calls a "mistress-pattern", which in turn leads to a coloured middle class, that neither belonged to the "white", nor to the "black" part of the population. Children born as a consequence of this "mistress-pattern" were in many cases given a higher status among the slaves. They often worked less, ate more, and sometimes they even lived in the white owners' house (Eriksen 1996).

Not all the slaves managed to live under the white plantation owners conditions, so many ran away into the jungle or to the mountains, where they cultivated the environment and maintained their cultural inheritance. These enclaves of fugitives have later been known as "Maroons" or "Neg Mawon" (Reynolds 2003).

During the 18th Century the demand on sugar fell in Europe and at the same time the resistance against slavery increased. This led to an end of the shipping of workers, and to the liberation of slaves. After the liberation there was a lack of work capacity, and contractworkers from other European colonies (mostly India) went to the Caribbean islands to work. Most of them were men, and because of the shortage of women, a mix between the cultures was natural. On some islands intermarriage was more accepted than on others, and the nuances of colours are given importance even today (Eriksen 1996).

From the last part of the 19th Century to the middle of the 20th Century most of the Caribbean islands got their independence, or a type of independence. To many islands it has been a long and difficult struggle. Some colonies, like Martinique and Guadeloupe became French departments (1946) instead of independent states. The UK tried long to gather the colonies in a union. But after several attempts they gave up the initiative. Some of the larger islands (Jamaica and Trinidad) are independent today; while some of the smaller islands are members of the Commonwealth (like St.

Lucia), where the English Queen (Elisabeth II) is the official chief of state (Eriksen 1996).

Historically, many Caribbean countries had difficulties in communicating with each other at an official level, because they used to communicate via their colonial masters. Today however the Caribbean countries have established a common market CARICOM (the Caribbean Community) and an organisation OECS (the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States), that looks after the regions interests (Ellis 2003). This perspective can also be found in the field of adult education, where the University of the West Indies has three campuses in Jamaica, Trinidad and Barbados.

1.3.3 St. Lucian facts

The island measures 616 sq km where nearly 156,300 persons reside (Aschehoug og Gyldendal 2000). The climate is tropical and the terrain is volcanic and mountainous with some broad, fertile valleys. Around 90 % of the population is black, and the rest are either mixed, East Indian or white. Eclectic borrowing of customs from the French, the British and the Africans has over time made the society and the culture very homogenous. St. Lucia has a growing elderly population with a decline in the fertility rate.

Nearly 90% of the population represents the Roman Catholic Church and 3% represent the Church of England, while the rest are of various Protestant denominations. The official language is English, but among themselves, especially in the rural areas, St. Lucians speak their local language Kwéyól, which is a French-based patois.

St. Lucian economy has long been excessively dependent on the agriculture of bananas (since the 1950's), but after changes in the European Union (EU) import preference regime, economic diversification (industry, foreign business and investments in offshore banking and tourism) has become increasingly important to St. Lucia (Reynolds 2003). The unemployment rate is a disturbing 20 %, and the literacy rate is high (85%) when measured in school attendance, but there is a

growing concern about the level of functional illiteracy (Education Statistical Digest 2003)⁴.

The executive branch is manifested in: *chief of state* (Queen Elisabeth II), represented by a *Governor General* (Dame Pearlette Louisy), *Head of government* (Prime Minister Kenneth Davis Anthony and Deputy Prime Minister Morio Michel), and *the cabinet* which is appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister.

1.3.4 Adult Education in the English-Speaking Caribbean

“Any vision of education that is seen to be necessary and appropriate for equipping Caribbean Community citizens to survival and live meaningful lives in the Twenty-First Century, must be informed by an understanding of the important place of adult education in shaping the future of CARICOM. If adult education is to play its role alongside and not behind the education of children, serious attention must be given to its content and delivery, to how it is administrated and managed, and to ensuring that it caters to adults at all levels of the Caribbean Community” (CARICOM 1993, p. 52).

All the English-speaking countries have retained and practised the Westminster-based system of government. In addition, they are members of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), which is an intergovernmental mechanism, were they “*meet to discuss matters of common concern and to agree on politics and actions for achieving common goals*” (Ellis, Ramsay, & Small 2000 p. 1).

The Commonwealth countries have also adopted the British educational system, with minor changes to suit the Caribbean culture and needs. They recognise education to be important and spend a significant amount of their national budget on education (Ellis, Ramsay, & Small 2000). Education is free and compulsory up to tertiary level (An overview, see *Structure of the education system of St. Lucia 2003*, in the NELP section below).

Looking back in history, to 1977, we will find the beginning of organised adult education activities in the Caribbean region. It started with a conference in St. Lucia where the General Assembly of the International Council of Adult Education (ICAE)

⁴ The annual Ministry of Education document highlighting statistical information on various education sub-sectors.

suggested that the Caribbean should be a sub-region within the region of Latin America. An interim Council of the Caribbean Regional Council for Adult Education (CARCAE) was established. In 1978 CARICOM recommended that CARCAE should be *“responsible to promote the formation of national associations of adult education, organise and implement a program of training of adult educators in the region”* (Ellis, et. al. 2000 p. 6), and in 1983 during CARCAE’s first assembly the constitution was ratified. CARCAE was now in a position to promote and facilitate the development and provision of adult education in the English-speaking Caribbean.

CARCAE arranged many conferences, seminars and workshops at national, regional and international levels. This provided newly appointed Adult Educational Officers and other educators from the Caribbean region with needed information and useful insights before they established national associations of adult education. Over a period of few years, CARCAE managed to engage and educate many educators in the region, but the level of advocacy outside the few pressure groups was low. This resulted in an ineffective development of policy and an opening to private sector and NGO’s. At the end of the 1980s and in the 1990s, adult education courses were offered and provided with no coordination or cooperation between NGO’s, public- and private sector. Adult education had become too fragmented and ad hoc based.

In 1988 CARCAE commissioned a status quo rapport of adult education in the Caribbean, and in 1990 *“A survey of Adult Education in the Caribbean: Policy, Practise, Impacts and Projections”* by Harvey and Williams was published. The survey concluded that the region had to:

“draw attention to the dearth of documentation and inadequate mechanisms for documentations, storage, and retrieval of information on the history, organisation, provision, and impact of adult education in the region” (Ellis, et. al. 2000 p. 15).

Throughout the 1990s many of the national associations became dormant, because of a lack of financial support, goodwill, and unsatisfied educators. St. Lucia’s Adult Educational Officer confirmed this stagnation and he said CARCAE had for some reason fallen on hard times during the 1990s (Interview: AEO).

One of CARCAE's major goals was to let the governments know how important adult education was to the process and outcome of national development, especially in periods of rapid socio-economic change. In the late 1980s and early 1990s, worldwide economic recession had a deep impact on Caribbean countries, as had the new agreements for international trade (open marked), and their loss of protectionism and preferential treatments. It resulted in major cuts in public expenditure and deterioration in the quality of life. In education they more or less managed to maintain the coverage, but the quality of teachers and students, basic materials, and working conditions sank drastically. To cope with the situation they developed three main strategies. The first was to give priority to the population group at risk, focusing on basic education and literacy. The second was to improve efficiency in the management of the education system. And the third strategy was to coordinate health care from the vantage point of the school and to maintain and increase food aid provided in schools.

The worldwide changes mentioned above may be seen as the beginning of the major challenges the region is facing. Challenges like a changing nature of work and workplace, gender, health, the environment, and use of IT and communication. All these changes and challenges require knowledge and skills of the workers that match the demands of the new society.

Even though many countries experienced a major setback in the 1990s, some countries like Belize, Anguilla, Trinidad and Tobago (among others) continued their educational work and in 1997, CARICOM Heads of Government attended a meeting organised by CARCAE. They agreed on a Human Resource Development Strategy, where lifelong learning was the underlying principle, together with the strengthening of non-formal education. This shift in paradigm from "schooling" to "learning" resulted in a renewal for many countries. They started to produce policy documents, setting a new framework for adult and continuing education. How should we help people to learn how to learn, and to think critically and to reason, instead of imparting knowledge?

Adult education in St. Lucia has been influenced by several countries in the Caribbean, starting with Cuba in the 1960s, with their Cuban National Literacy

Crusade. These new thoughts influenced St. Lucia and illiteracy started to be an area of interest to some community groups and church organisations. At first, literacy was the main focus, but later they offered home economics, basic skills training, and other “non-academic” forms of continuing education. In 1984 the government decided to have an adult educational program, and they appointed an educational officer and established a program containing basic literacy and numeracy skills. In 1999 it was time to restructure the program, and they decided to incorporate technical and vocational education in addition to enrichment programs.

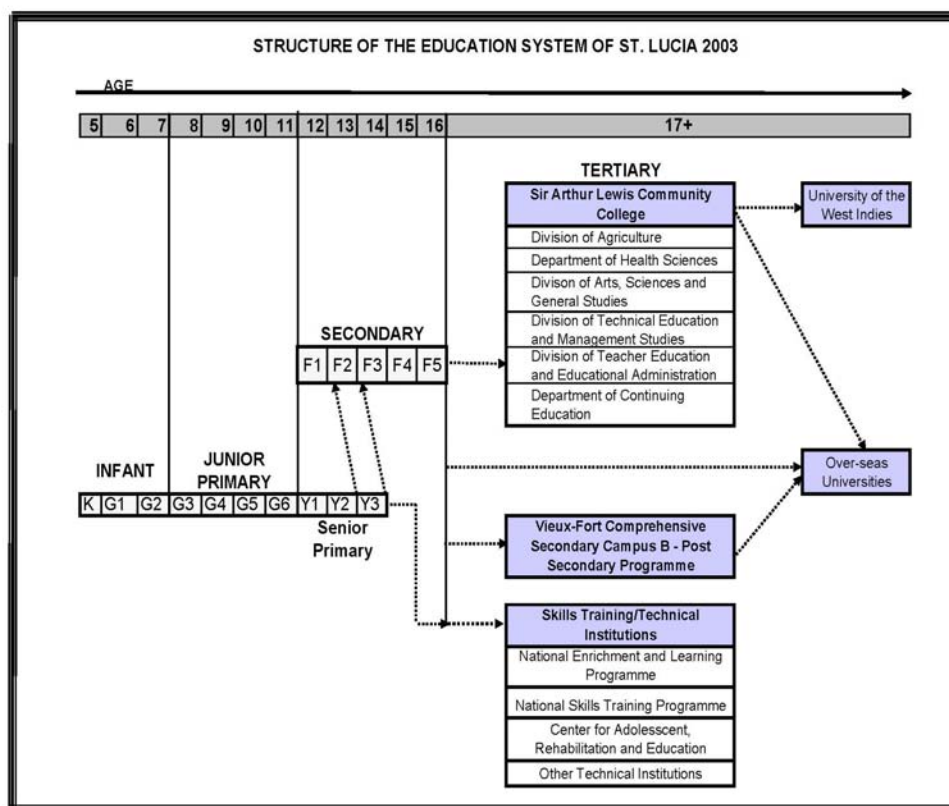
In St. Lucia, the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth and Sport responded by preparing a comprehensive document; *Adult and Continuing Education in St. Lucia: Addressing Global Transformation and the New Millennium* (Jules 1999), describing their new philosophical and conceptual framework within a National Adult and Continuing Education Programme.

Jules (1999) tells us a story of adult education being a neglected cousin of the formal education system. In the Caribbean region, adult education has always been seen as a remedial necessity rather than a developmental imperative. Many educators believe that lack of clarity has made it difficult for adult education to become the “creator” of the learning society, and that the English-speaking Caribbean is too fragmented to address adult education effectively (Carrington 2002). Therefore, Ellis et. al (2000) have taken the agenda from the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA V, 1997) and launched the idea of implementing certificate, diploma, and degree programmes in adult education at the University of the West Indies.

1.3.5 National Enrichment and Learning Program (NELP)

St. Lucia’s formal educational system comprises of four levels: early childhood education with 153 schools, 82 primary schools, 18 secondary schools, and 2 tertiary schools. In addition there are 5 special education schools, 1 skills training centre, and 11 national enrichments and learning centres. These are all public schools. In addition there exist 7 private primary and 2 private secondary schools (Education Statistical digest 2003).

Figure 1.1: The structure of the education system of St. Lucia 2003



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Source: Education Statistical digest 2003 p. xxvii.

The first Unit (the Adult Educational Program) held classes in 1984 with the aim to develop and formulate illiteracy programmes assisting adults to gain knowledge and skills of numeracy and literacy. Later (2001), the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth & Sports wanted the learning opportunities to be more purposeful, useful and relevant to the participants. This change of program was part of a shift to a new paradigm that can be seen both in their Structure of the Adult Educational Program and Vision Statement:

To contribute to the creation of A Learning Society through the provision of cost effective and integrated continuing education opportunities (Jules 1999 p. 16).

Through this shift in paradigm, NELP hoped (on a long term basis) that learning would become an attitude or a habit, and not something you have to do within a formal educational system. To manage this, NELP restructured their program into three components, and made all the various course modules short, comprehensive and intensive. The three components were:

- Core subject
- Supplemental
- Enrichment programs

The Core subject consists of compulsory courses that all participants have to follow. In this module the participants are given provision for basic (Level 1, 2, 3) and advanced (continuing education programs like Social Studies, Integrated Science, Language, and Mathematics) literacy and numeracy skills.

At the Supplemental component, the participants are provided with the opportunity to acquire employable, marketable and specific skills like: Electrical Installation, Carpentry, IT, Garment Construction, and Cake Baking and Decorating.

The last module that is, Enrichment programs, the participants have the possibility to attend optional courses that reflect their personal interest and personal development needs like Music, Healthy Life Styles, Water Resource Management, Human Relations, and Flora & Fauna.

During an interview I had with the Adult Educational Officer, he told me that technical courses like sewing, plumbing and IT were the most popular courses, even though they were the most expensive ones. NELP had earlier tried to offer some of the courses for free, but experienced a higher drop out rate because the learners did not commit themselves. Therefore, as a consequence of their new learning society philosophy with a large variation of courses, and St. Lucia's uncertain illiteracy rate, they priced the basic courses to be 1/3 of the price of the enrichment and supplemental courses. According to the Adult Educational Officer this has made a significant difference in numbers of graduated learners (Interview: AEO). He also told me that at the moment the graduate papers the learners received from the National

Enrichment and Learning Unit (NELU) were not seen as equal to other educational papers by the employers. But they were in the process of establishing a national accreditation body, which will provide them with a certification. They are also in close dialogue with employees around the island, to develop the content of the different courses.

In 2002/03 NELP had 11 public centres distributed in eight communities throughout the island, and a total of 1506 learners or 2.9% of the total enrolment (52000 learners) at all school levels (Education Statistical Digest 2003). Attending the courses, I found learners coming from every sector of society and an age range from 17 to 68 years. Among the learners there were approximately 75% women (Education Statistical Digest 2003). I asked the Adult Educational Officer about the gender figures, and although he had no simple explanation for the imbalance in the enrolment rates. He told me about a society in change where women were breaking the traditional patterns, and showing more interest in developing themselves than men.

“Facilitators’ working at the Unit seldom engage themselves for the reason of prestige or money” (Interview: AEO).

Instead they are trained teachers with a commitment and interest in the program as a whole and in the community. When the Unit recruits facilitators with no or little experience with adult education methodology, they first go through a training module offered by the Unit, before they start their instruction of the learners (Interview: AEO).

NELP’s strategies for delivery of instruction in the program are listed in the comprehensive document: *Adult and Continuing Education in St. Lucia: Addressing Global Transformation and the New Millennium*. This document and my interview with the Adult Educational Officer are the “official” information I managed to gather regarding strategies of instruction during my stay in St. Lucia. The following strategies of instruction are proposed and listed in the document as possible strategies without being instructive or obligatory. They are presented as a part of NELP’s philosophical and conceptual framework, and are therefore informative as background information to my analysis.

- Face-to-face instruction
- Simulation exercises, scenarios and interactive engagements (learner-centred approaches)
- Attachments – field placement (learning by doing)
- Distance teaching (radio and TV)
- Print and electronic media
- The UNESCO Documentation Centre as a major repository of audio-visual material

A general description of the participants

In the Basic course there were ten learners registered, but three of them seldom showed up in class. Four of them were females and six were male. The youngest one was a boy at 17 years and the oldest was a 67 year-old woman. The three youngest (17-23 years) learners were males, while the rest were a mixed group of age and sex. All of them were representative for the lower strata of the society, and only one of them had completed primary education. Three of them had signed up for the course at an earlier stage, but did not manage to complete the course for different reasons. In my point of view I think several of the learners at one stage had lost their self-interest in the course.

The facilitator was a female in her late 30's and she was the only non-teacher at the unit. She has been a facilitator for over ten years, is educated and now she does administrative work. She represents those women who have succeeded in having a career in addition to a family.

In the Garment course there were nineteen females and one male. Four of the women and the one male were under 25, while the rest were between 26-45 years of age. In contrast to the basic course, the learners here were representative from a higher level of the society. The Facilitator was a female (52 years) with many years of experience as a teacher and a facilitator. All of the learners showed a large interest in the course, and an eager to learn more about Garment construction.

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This master thesis is divided in five chapters. In the second chapter I will clarify some important concepts before I turn to the development of learning theories in adulthood. They are presented in four main orientations starting with the behaviour orientation followed by the cognitive, the humanist, and the social learning orientation, before the chapter ends, a summary of the learning theories will be elaborated on.

The research methodologies used in the description of "a learning situation" are outlined in chapter three. Here I argue for a combined methodology (though with a mainly qualitative approach), and I present my tools of research (participant observations, interviews, and questionnaire). Lastly I clarify the concepts of validity and reliability, before I shortly describe what happened when I came to St. Lucia and began my fieldwork.

Chapter four is my analysis chapter, called "Describing Pictures". Through my tools of research I have gathered information which in turn has become important prerequisites in order to understand the interaction between the learners and the facilitators. These prerequisites (Predetermined assumptions, Distractions, and Interaction) form and frame the chapter as a description of "a learning situation" among the participants at NELP. In this chapter I have coded examples from my observations, questionnaire and interviews. An overview of my coding is presented in Appendix 1.

My thesis ends with an Outcome chapter (chapter five). Here I answer my three research questions, and I close with some concluding thoughts.

1.5 Limitations

The limitations of my master thesis has been lack of resources such as time, money and knowledge on one side, and use of interpretations on the other (Said 2003).

The master thesis begins with limited possibilities to prepare oneself for subjects such as choice of topic, country, establishing contacts and duration of fieldwork. As a student at this level, money will always be an issue. It decides how and perhaps when to travel, where to stay and how to live during your fieldwork. Preparing for fieldwork is one thing, but doing it is another. I experienced a lack of knowledge of

the culture and the language. I thought I knew theory and had a good idea of methods, but when practicing my thoughts (plan) it often failed for reasons I could not foresee.

All of the elements or limitations mentioned are of great importance on how you interpret what you see, feel, hear and smell when doing fieldwork. And later, during the analyses work, you will again interpret your data. A researcher's interpretation may therefore also be seen as a major limitation, especially seen from a quantitative point of view.

Another aspect concerning limitations is that it leads to new possibilities, both positive and negative.

2 Theoretical framework

Theory is, to some extent, connected to time and space and it builds on data that is tested over and over again. Theories of social science try to explain, predict or even make generalisations about how the world operates (Creswell 1998). Pelto & Pelto (1978 p. 2) define theory like this:

“It is one of the goals of all the scientific disciplines to link together low-order generalizations, or propositions, into larger networks of propositions that will make possible the prediction and explanation of phenomena within the given domain. Such networks of propositions are generally called *theories*”.

The theoretical framework used in this study, is determined by the objective and the research questions presented earlier and by my data gathered during my fieldwork. Through my description of “a learning situation” at NELP I found that all the facilitators at the courses used many different theories and methods originating from different orientations (behaviourist, cognitive, humanistic, and social learning) and approaches (didactic, Socratic, and facilitative), when interacting with the learners. It was therefore necessary to examine the theories of learning in a broad view and then narrow the scope to adult learning theories. But, before I turn to learning theories in adulthood there is a need to clarify some important concepts used in the thesis.

2.1 Clarifying concepts

Within the field of adult education, there are many concepts developed and used by educators and others. Many of these concepts have the characteristic of being interpreted and used in variety of ways, not only across time, space, and cultures, but also between practitioners. Therefore, it will be of importance to elaborate on already established concepts like: *adults, adult education, learning, and facilitation of learning* and self defined concepts like: *interaction* and “*a learning situation*” which are developed through empirical data.

To many people being an adult is something you become when you reach a certain age. To others, adult is only a word meaning not child or youth. What these may have

in common are their understanding of a set of ideals and values it requires becoming an adult (Rogers, A 2002). Adulthood may be seen as a level of maturity, and it is defined by law which differs from culture to culture. Tight (1996 p. 14) defines adulthood to “be considered as a state of being which both accords status and rights to individuals and simultaneously confers duties or responsibilities upon them”.

Adult and adult education in St. Lucia is defined by the Adult Educational Officer to be:

“Basically providing training for persons who are not reading and who have passed the age of formal education, for example we see any person who is not in the formal school system, the compulsory age is 15 years, anybody above 15, any kind of training for them is adult education” (Interview: AEO).

A broad definition like this is considered “modern” and is found in a large international body like UNESCO:

“The term ‘adult education’ denotes the entire body of organised processes, whatever the content level, and method, whether formal and otherwise, whether they prolong or replace initial education in schools, colleges, and universities, as well as in apprenticeship, whereby persons regarded as adult by the society to which they belong develop their abilities, enrich their knowledge, improve their technical or professional qualifications, or turn them in a new direction and bring about changes in their attitudes and behaviour in the two-fold perspective of full personal development and participation in balanced and independent social, economic and cultural development” (UNESCO 1976, Quoted in Tight 1996 p. 61-62).

By contrast, Jarvis (1995) stated a common view of adult education in the United Kingdom to be an essentially spare-time activity for interest or amusement.

To me adult education is both. When living in Norway I am thinking of adult education as Jarvis does, but when reading, travelling or doing research in countries like St. Lucia adult education becomes an important factor in re-education and even for survival.

The concept of 'learning' has always been an object of discussion amongst psychologists, educators and others within different orientations of learning. Therefore, there is no common definition of the concept, but rather several, that I will examine in the following part 'learning theories in adulthood' in the theoretical framework chapter.

In 'learning theories in adulthood' (found in this chapter) and in the analyses chapter I will examine the concept 'facilitation of learning' by examine several researchers from the time the concept arose in the 1970s, which challenged the established didactic approach.

In my research objective (p. 7) I say:

“The objective of this study is to describe *”a learning situation”* by focusing on the *interaction* between the participants at the NELP in St. Lucia”.

As we can see, the two concepts *”a learning situation”* and 'interaction' are of importance to my study. They are what I would call my key concepts.

To me, *”a learning situation”* consists of different prerequisites which became visible during my time in class. These are the framework of *”a learning situation”* and by describing them I will better understand the interaction between the participants. The three prerequisites I have focused on are: Predetermined assumptions, Distractions and Interaction (for further explanations see *”a learning situation”* in the analyses chapter).

I have defined 'interaction' to be a reciprocal action were learners and facilitators talk to each other and work together in order to teach and learn. In my analyses, I will describe episodes and give examples of how I have interpreted the interaction in class.

2.2 Learning theories in adulthood

Learning theories in adulthood have their origin in learning in general, which is a large area and a complex phenomenon, where no single theory, model, or set of principles, provide a sole solution to the concept. Learning has a huge range of variables that have been of interest to philosophers, psychologists, educators, religious instructors, and politicians for centuries. Thus, learning has been studied and outlined in a number of ways, some of which have contributed to an understanding of learning in adulthood.

Since the concept 'learning' is rooted in such a wide spectrum of traditions, there are a number of alternatives on how to divide and label learning theories. The purpose of this study is not to work out a new frame for learning theories, instead I will make use of an already developed method to categorise learning theories. Knowles (1984) uses Reese and Overton's (1970) organisation and groups them in two different worldviews: mechanical and organic, while Jarvis (1995) refers to Merriam and Cafferella's (1991) four basic orientations to typify the learning theories: behaviourist, cognitive, humanist, and social learning.

In my thesis I will follow Merriam and Cafferella's (1991) framework of learning, because I find their classification to suite the overall frame of "a learning situation" at NELP, St. Lucia. However, it is important to stress that the orientations are not mutually exclusive, meaning that some of the theorists examined below can fit into more than one orientation, which is not within the area of research in this study

It is also important to mention that many of the researchers and researchers I have examined are not educators, but sociologists and especially psychologists. The main argument for this was at the time, that they were the leading forces in the field of learning. Most of the early theories developed (behaviourism and Gestaltists), did not have a focus on adults when developed. They did not even examine humans, but animals. Despite this, they are still very important to the field of adult education and some of them have, at a later stage, been taken into account as adult learning theories. Other theories are seen as a first step in a new perspective and are, therefore, important to examine.

There exists a range of different definitions of learning and since I am going to use Merriam and Cafferella's (1991) framework, they will provide us with a definition of every orientation.

2.2.1 Behaviourist orientation

At the beginning of the last century the major dominating ideas were Darwinism, pragmatism, and metaphysical behaviourism. Through these ideas, a new breeze blew which had a great influence on the thinking in psychology and philosophy and, in turn, education. Dewey's (1916) philosophy in educational thoughts and the rise of modern psychology (Pavlov, Thorndike, Skinner, and others) have been of great importance in explaining learning behaviour. Lindeman's *The Meaning of Adult Education* (1926) laid the foundation for a systematic theory about adult learning and Thorndike, Bergman, Tilton, and Woodyard followed in 1928 with questioning the adult's capacity to learn, and whether or not intelligence declines with age. It resulted in the book *Adult Learning*, and it was the first systematic investigation done in the field of adult education (Merriam 1993).

Most of the scientists, who gave the modern psychology its principal characteristics, did not focus on subjective experience, but external observations of behaviour. They experimented with animals in a well-defined environment and their research can be presented in the form of stimulus (S) and response (R). Therefore, S-R can be seen as the cornerstone in the behaviourist explanation of learning.

The process (S-R), from the stimulus is given to a response that occurs is what the behaviourists call *conditioning*. Watson (1924), who is seen as the founder of behaviourism, believed that if the stimulus was known, he could predict in advance what the response would be. Or if the response was given, he would know what caused the action. Not all agreed, because many found it very difficult to see what caused behaviour or what response would be derived from a stimulus, because of the question of time. He developed two laws: the law of frequency and the law of recency, where he argued that:

"The more frequently a stimulus and a response are associated, the stronger the habit will become" (Jarvis et al. 1998 p. 23).

Thorndike, a contemporary, did not support Watson, but believed that learning was a matter of establishing connections (Thorndike 1924; Kidd 1973). His main focus was not on stimulus and response, but on what held the two together. He believed that a neural bond connected S- R and therefore he proposed three laws: the law of exercise, the law of frequency (readiness), and the law of effect. Where the two former explain the connection between S-R, the third proposed that:

"If a stimulus leads to a response, which in turn leads to reinforcement, the S-R connection is strengthened. If, on the other hand, a stimulus leads to a response, which leads to punishment, the S-R connection is weakened" (Hergenhahn 1988, p.63; Jarvis et al. 1998).

This theory is also called 'trial and error', or even more familiar 'problem solving'. At the same time as Thorndike developed his theory, Pavlov (1927) worked with the organism entailing the nervous system. Hence, it is more correct to see Pavlov's work as Stimulus-Neural-process-Response (S-N-R), instead of S-R. Pavlov's objective associationism consists of his concept of classical conditioning. In his experiments with dogs, he managed to teach them to salivate at the sound of a buzzer. Meaning that a dog learned to *associate* the presentation of a reward with a stimulus that occurred fractionally prior to it (Sahakian 1976).

Opposed to Pavlov's classical conditioning is Skinner's operant conditioning (Skinner 1971). Classical conditioning or respondent conditioning (Type S), as Skinner calls it, which emphasises the importance of the stimulus in eliciting the desired response. While operant conditioning (Type R) resembles Thorndike's instrumental conditioning with an emphasis on the response. Skinner focused on '*rate of response*' instead of '*time to solution*' like Thorndike. The primary law of operant conditioning states that:

"If the occurrence of an operant is followed by presentation of a reinforcing stimulus, the strength is increased" (Sahakian 1976, p. 134).

It seemed that any response simple or complex that was rewarded or reinforced had a tendency to persist. The reinforcement of a desired behaviour is essential to

Skinner in order to understand his operant conditioning. He operates with a positive and a negative reinforcement, where in the former you add a stimulus and in the latter you remove one (i.e. food or music). All of Skinner experiments were done in a controlled environment, and he believed that all behaviour was learned by reinforcement (or reward). Even a human personality would to him be:

“.... only what we have been reinforced for being” and “a person’s personality is nothing more than consistent behaviour patterns that summarize our reinforcement history” (Hergenhahn 1988, p. 83).

Hull (1943), another behaviourist, developed a version of S-R to be Stimulus-Organism-Response (S-O-R). It stated a constant interaction between the organism and its environment, where the environment provided the stimuli and the organism responded. In his theory:

“The reinforcement is typically considered to occur when a motive is directly satisfied—when a fundamental drive like hunger undergoes a reduction in intensity” (Gagnè 1970, p. 17).

These theories of learning have received much attention through the years, but cognitive theorists challenged the behaviourist orientation in the mid-twentieth century. Some influential thinkers will be examined here, but first I will turn to those who started the attack on behaviourist view: the Gestaltists (adherents of Gestalt psychology).

2.2.2 Cognitive orientation

The cognitive orientation started as a critique of S-R conditioning and reinforcement (association psychology). The Gestaltists disagreed with the importance of small parts and single incidents in the situation of learning. Instead they emphasized the *whole* and *patterns* of learning. Slogans as “*the whole is more than the sum of the parts*”, and “*to dissect is to distort*”, were battle cries rooted in the definition of Gestalt (Hergenhahn 1988, p. 244). Gestalt is the German word for *shape* or *form*, and the adherents of this view do not see isolated stimuli, but stimuli gathered together into meaningful shapes or Gestalten.

Max Wertheimer, Wolfgang Kohler, and Kurt Koffka's research in Gestalt psychology is labelled cognitive or information processing learning theories and are considered as important as the work of Pavlov and Thorndike. Kohler's (1925) research with apes and gorillas have features from Thorndike's theory 'trial and error'. Learning is here seen as a cognitive phenomenon, where the learner comes to see the solution after pondering a problem. Kohler believed that:

'A solution to a problem could come abrupt as a flash of insight,' and when it did 'the solution would be permanent and carry over into other experiments.' Kohler argued for *'the solution to come about, because the learner perceives the relationship of the different factors in the scene rather than responding to isolated stimuli'* (Kidd 1973, p.171).

Common for the wide range of topics within the cognitive orientation was their focus on internal mental processes, and that learning became a reorganisation of experiences in order to make sense of stimuli in the environment (Bruner 1965; Caffarella and Merriam 1991).

A psychologist influenced by both the behaviourists and Gestaltists school of thought, was Jean Piaget (1952). He postulated a number of stages in the process of cognitive development, which he related to learning. Since his work is based on children, his analysis of the five stages ends at the age of 15. Later, many thinkers have followed and built upon Piaget's approach of learning, and claimed his theory to be relevant to the development of adults. Kohlberg's (1986) and Fowler's (1981) research on moral development and religious faith development, are both stage theories influenced by Piaget, but neither of them are as discrete nor so specifically age-related as Piaget's original theory (Jarvis et al. 1998). Others have focused on reaction (Neugarten 1976) and dialectic thought (Allman 1984), with the ideas of Piaget in their research of adult development.

Another cognitive theorist who studied children in his research was Lev Vygotsky. He disagreed with Piaget's developmental theory, since Piaget's theory argues that the cognitive development seemed to precede the learning. Vygotsky studied 'the actual relations of the developmental process to learning capabilities' and by doing this, he made several discoveries. He concluded that (1978, p. 88):

“Human learning presupposes a specific social nature and a process by which children grow into the intellectual life of those around them”.

And based on this he stated that (1978, p. 90; Jarvis et al. 1998, p. 34):

“... developmental processes do not coincide with learning processes. Rather, the developmental process lags behind the learning process; this sequence then results in zones of proximal development”.

Meaning, that we must use the possibilities within the zone of proximal development, by encourage the child to be active together with other children, and give help and support in their process of managing on their own.

Some cognitive theorists have tried to unite what is known about learning, with the best way to facilitate learning. Among those who have developed theories of instruction, are Bruner, Ausubel and Gagnè. Bruner (1965) has developed a theory of discovery learning, where one should approach learning as a task of discovering something rather than ‘learning about’ it. Through this discovery process a person will transform knowledge into new insights and learning is here seen as a reward by discovery itself.

Contrasted to Bruner, Ausubel (1978) argued that there is a substantial difference between rote learning and meaningful learning. He emphasized the importance of the individual cognitive structure in new learning and that learning is a process of constructing new meaning. Ausubel claimed that learning was only meaningful when related to an already established concept in a person’s cognitive structure.

Robert M. Gagné developed a model that:

“Attempts to consider the sets of circumstances that obtain when learning occurs, that is, when certain observable changes in human behaviour take place that justify the inference of learning” (1970, p. 3).

He identifies five major categories of learning outcomes/capabilities (verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, motor skills, and attitude) and

eight types of learning (signal learning, stimulus-response learning, chaining, verbal association, discrimination learning, concept learning, rule learning and problem solving), which he illustrated in a hierarchical way.

Neither the behaviourist, nor the cognitive orientation, had strong links to learning in adulthood, but many of the later contributors have used a behaviourist view within a new frame (orientation) to develop or focus on other parts (Bandura 1977). As mentioned in the beginning of the review, not many of the learning theories examined above were created with adults in mind. This is quite different in the next orientation, where learning theories are made to fit adults.

2.2.3 Humanist orientation

“The facilitation of significant learning rests upon certain attitudinal qualities that exist in the personal relationship between facilitator and learner” (Rogers 1990 p. 305).

Within the philosophy of existentialism, which developed in the interwar period in Germany and after World War II in France, one can find the thoughts of humanism. Both existentialism and humanism, stress the uniqueness of human existence, in particular the human freedom and the possibility of self- development, meaning that human beings can decide their own destiny, by taking individual choices based on the assumption that people are good.

Two of the psychologists who have contributed most to our understanding of learning within humanism are Abraham Maslow and Carl Rogers. Maslow's (1970) theory of human motivation is based on a hierarchy of needs, where self- actualisation is the ultimate need. Rogers' theory of learning (1983) is a theory in both education and therapy. This theory is student-centred and client-centred therapy, with a focus on significant learning that leads to personal growth and development. Rogers' (1983 p. 20) significant learning (also called: experiential learning or meaningful learning) contains five elements described in *Freedom to learn for the 80's* as:

- *Personal involvement*, the affective and cognitive aspects of a person should be involved in the learning event.
- *Self-initiated*, a sense of discovery must come from within.

- *Pervasive*, the learning makes a difference in the behaviour, the attitudes, perhaps even the personality of the learner.
- *Evaluated by the learner*, the learner can best determine whether the experience is meeting a need.
- *Essence is meaning*, when experiential learning takes place, it's meaning to the learner becomes incorporated into the total experience.

Many of Maslow and Rogers' concepts have later been picked up by educators and adopted into adult education. Knowles (1990) has extended several of them.

Andragogy, facilitation, and self-directed learning, are concepts that have been transformed into general theories in adult education. In the 1970-80's Knowles became the apostle of andragogy when he concerned himself with what self-directed learning implied for teachers and learners, and for the theory of adult education and lifelong learning.

Andragogy is, by Knowles, defined as '*the art and science of helping adults to learn*' (Knowles 1980 p. 43). He differentiates clearly between andragogy and pedagogy and claimed first four, later six, assumptions to distinguish between how adults and children learn (Jarvis 1995 p. 90; Finger and Asun 2001 p. 70-71):

- *A change in self- concept*, since adults need to be more self- directive.
- *Experience*, since mature individuals accumulate an expanding reservoir of experience, which becomes an exceedingly rich resource in learning.
- *Readiness to learn*, since adults want to learn in the problem areas with which they are confronted and which they regard as relevant.
- *Orientation towards learning*, since adults have a problem centred orientation they are less likely to be subject centred.
- *Motivation to learn is intrinsic to the learner*.
- *The need to know*, where the facilitator helps the learner to articulate his or hers needs, and contributes to satisfying them.

Knowles has later been heavily criticized and one of the essential weaknesses is that andragogy (only) assumed that self-actualisation leads to a better society. But he is still seen as one of the most important subscribers, not only in the humanistic orientation, but in general, within the field of adult education. Stephan Brookfield, who has furthered Knowles ideas, took the concept of self-directed learning into critically reflection/ thinking (Brookfield 1985). He believes one should begin to think critical about the social world, and see how it can contribute to your needs. It is a learning theory that is identified with personal growth and social change. Brookfield is not

seen as a groundbreaker in the field, but his work has been of great importance for defining what adult education is and what it should be in the future.

Peter Jarvis and Jack Mezirow are two of the most fundamental educators of today and they have both contributed with profound adult learning theories. I have not categorised Jarvis in this orientation, because of his focus on the relationship between the individual and society. I will therefore examine his theories in the Social learning orientation, but he and Jack Mezirow (who is something between the cognitive and the humanist orientation), do have common features/ideas which are building on a version of American pragmatism. I will therefore in order to fully understand Jarvis and Mezirow's theories, that have its origin from Mead (1934) and especially Blumer (1969), first present 'symbolic interactionism', before I examine their respective theories.

Symbolic interactionism

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, during the period when pragmatism emerged as a distinct philosophical formation in America, symbolic interactionist texts saw the gleam of daylight. Works of G. H. Mead, Charles H. Cooley, John Dewey, and W. I. Thomas have today become canonical texts developed during the heyday of the University of Chicago (Prus 1996).

The theory of symbolic interactionism is a sum of four sub-traditions, these are: (1) The hermeneutics (interpretative understanding) of Wilhelm Dilthey; (2) American pragmatism (which emphasised the practical accomplishment of human activity) of Dewey; (3) Cooley's (1909) methods of "sympathetic introspection" (field research); and (4) the body of ethnographic research, which has developed dramaturgical approach (Goffman), and ethnomethodology (Garfinkel). All these traditions appear to be clearly distinct orientations within symbolic interactionism. Common to the four varieties of the theory are Blumer's (1969 p. 2) three fundamental premises:

- The first premise is that human beings act toward things on the basis of the meaning that things have for them.
- The second premise is that the meaning of such things is derived from, or arises out of, the social interaction that human beings have with one another.

- The third premise is that these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by the person in dealing with the things he encounters.

In this image the most basic element is the idea that the individual and the society are inseparable units. For a complete understanding of either one of them, one demands a complete understanding of the other. It is a mutually interdependent relationship and not a one-sided deterministic one. (Meltzer, Petras and Reynolds 1975 p. 2).

Jack Mezirow (1991) has made use of writings from several various theoretical contributions, mainly from Dewey, Blumer and Kuhn, but also from Freire and Habermas. His theory of 'perspective transformation' is one of the most elaborated conceptualisations of adult learning. Mezirow sees 'perspectives' to be something everyone has. It is a construction of reality that transforms when a person's perspective is not in harmony with his/hers experience. Jarvis (1995 p. 94) state:

"In this situation of disjunction, the individual's construction of reality is then transformed as a result of reflecting upon the experience and plotting new strategies of living as a result of this assessment of the situation".

According to Mezirow, perspective transformation is identical to the process of adult development and true learning occurs when a perspective transformation happens. One of the major critiques of Mezirow is his lack of explanation of social action and social change. He assumes like the other educationalist in the humanist orientation, that their theory automatically leads to social action and social change.

2.2.4 Social learning orientation

"Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behaviour is learned observationally through modelling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviours are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action"
(Bandura 1977 p. 22).

As most of the other orientations, the social learning orientation has several kinds of learning theories. What they all have in common is the relationship between the individual and society.

Durkheim with others viewed the human society as a living organism, which stressed socialisation, culture, role, structure and the self, in order to maintain, survive and reproduce itself. His stance is clearly social functional and the idea that learning consists of social adaptation by individuals represents an important model of social learning (on how people learn).

Influenced by the behaviourists Miller and Dollard (1941), Albert Bandura produced a series of articles and books in the early 1960s. He challenged the older explanation of imitative learning (Miller and Dollard 1941) and expanded the concept into what is known today as observational learning. For centuries it has been taken for granted that humans learn by observing others, but both Thorndike and Watson tried in the early 1900s to verify this hypothesis with animals without any luck. Bandura claimed that:

“Virtually all learning phenomena resulting from direct experiences can occur on a vicarious basis through observations of other people’s behaviour and its consequences for the observer” (Sahakian 1976 p. 392).

To him observational learning was something more than a special case of instrumental conditioning. His research demonstrated that behavioural changes produced through instrumental conditioning, classical conditioning, extinction, and punishment was, largely, cognitively mediated (Sahakian 1976 p. 392). Bandura believed that learning was something that happened continuously, when it was needed, and not as a consequence of reinforcement. He argued that most of human learning occurred in the absence of reinforcement.

Peter Jarvis is, as mentioned earlier, an essential educationalist who has developed a theory based on adult’s experiences of the self (Mead) and symbolic interactionism (Blumer).

George Herbert Mead (1934) who took the idea of the social context of learning well beyond the concepts of individual adaptation and interaction, believed the self to be the identity of a person, and that an individual and a social being existed at the same time. He upheld that:” a person does not have any essence; he or she is the product

of social interaction” (Jarvis 1995 p. 57). Jarvis has adopted much of Mead’s thoughts and believes that experiential learning both leads to new knowledge, skills, values, attitudes, etc., and to the building-up of the person (the self). To him, learning and the building-up of a person begins in the discrepancy between how one presents an image to others vs. how others understand the image presented, and how you see yourself vs. how others see you. For Jarvis, all experience happens in a social situation, which in turn is a potential learning situation. This has resulted in a model of a learning process (1987) that distinguishes between several responses of learning: nonlearning responses, nonreflective learning and reflective learning.

Peter Jarvis has been seen as a ‘gatekeeper’ of the field of adult education. He is critical to the functionalist view of individuals as merely passive and conformist recipients of the prevailing cultural values of society. He states that the relationship between the individual and the society is more complex, and it should be understood as involving interaction and mutual influences. Our learning takes place in an interaction between others and ourselves, and in the context of prevailing beliefs and attitudes in the culture of the society (Jarvis et al. 1998 p. 40). Learning is seen not as social adoption (Durkheim), but as social action and interaction. Hence, the social context through communication, language, symbolism, etc., plays an important role in the learning process.

2.3 Summary

As we have seen through my examination, the four orientations differ in their view of learning. The behaviourist sees learning as a change in behaviour, with a focus on overt behaviour, which is a measurable response to stimuli in the environment. Thorndike did not support Pavlov’s objective associationism and Watson wanted to substitute the laws of frequency and recency with Thorndike’s law of effect. Skinner formulated a presentation of the variations of Thorndike’s law of effect and at the same time opposed classical conditioning.

In the cognitive orientation, researchers did not focus on external behaviour, but on internal mental processes and how learners reorganize their experiences in order to make sense of the stimuli in the environment. The individual role became the focus of

investigation, and the Gestaltists emphasized the whole, and patterns of learning, with Kohler's flash of insight.

Piaget developed a stage theory that Vygotsky disagreed with; on the grounds that the developmental process lags behind the learning process and not before, as Piaget claim. Contributors in the area of instruction were Bruner and Ausubel with their theories of discovery learning, and rote and meaningful learning, and Gagnè's major categories of learning outcomes/capabilities with his eight types of learning.

The humanistic orientation emphasised humans and their nature, potential, emotions, and affect (choices and responsibility) to learning. Maslow with his hierarchy of needs and Rogers' significant learning through personal growth and development has been of great importance to adult learning and education. Many of their concepts have later been extended and elaborated on by other educators, as for instance Knowles' and Brookfield's use of andragogy, facilitation and self-directed learning. Mezirow, who sees himself as a constructionist, has also drawn on writings from others in his perspective transformation theory, and then mainly from American pragmatism and Kuhn.

In social learning theory, learning occurs in the relation between the individual and society. This can be seen in an environment where people interact with each other, or where people can observe others. Bandura believed that learning was something that happened continuously, when it was needed, and not as a consequence of reinforcement as Thorndike and Watson believed. Mead's concept of the self is a model of how individuals are able to impose meaning on their own situations and experiences. Jarvis agreed with this, and his model of a learning process is based on a discrepancy between biography and experience, that takes place as a social action and interaction in a social context.

By using Merriam and Caffarella's framework in my examination of the contributors of learning theories, I found a logical and structured way too see how thoughts and theories (later adult learning theories) have developed through time. Lastly, it should be clear that the theories I have considered are only a handful of works among a

larger number, and seek to frame and communicate some fragments of the complex history of adult learning theories.

3 Research methodology

3.1 Combined methodology

The current chapter seeks to explain the choice of methodology and types of data collections used during my fieldwork. I have completed a study with the use of different methods, where I have combined different tools of research. Not only “within methods” (qualitative, e.g., interviews and observations), but also “between methods” (qualitative and quantitative, e.g., interviews and questionnaire). Denzin (1978) termed this combination of methodologies *triangulation*:

“The concept of *triangulation* was based on the assumption that any bias inherent in particular data sources, investigator, and method would be neutralized when used in conjunction with other data sources, researchers, and methods” (Creswell 1994).

Later on, several authors have suggested additional reasons to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches (Mathison 1988; Swanson 1992). Greene et al. (1989) advanced five purposes:

- Triangulation in the classic sense of seeking convergence of results
- Complimentary, in that overlapping and different facts of a phenomenon may emerge
- Developmentally, wherein the first method is used sequentially to help inform the second method
- Initiation, wherein contradictions and fresh perspectives emerge
- Expansion, wherein the mixed methods add scope and breadth to a study

Although I have used multiple methods of data collection, where interviews, observations and a questionnaire are emphasised, I will present my study within the dominant approach (qualitative), with one component (questionnaire) drawn from the less dominant approach (Creswell 1994).

3.1.1 A qualitative approach

Different philosophical assumptions (ontological, epistemological, axiological, rhetorical, and methodological) and ideological perspectives (i.e. a post-modern critique, a critical theory, or a feminist approach) always mark a qualitative study, emitting different meanings, theories, understandings, convictions, etc. to a person

(Creswell 1998). These assumptions and perspectives are to some people a stand taken years ago, while to others they only represent a suitable point of view during a research process.

In my purpose statement I maintain that I will *describe* "a learning situation" by focusing on the *interaction* between adult learners and facilitators at NELP, St. Lucia. Through my definition and description of "a learning situation" I will try to understand how the participants talk – and work together (interact) in order to learn and teach. What their common understanding- or meaning systems are within the classroom, and how they express themselves towards each other, their attitudes, are two of several questions asked during my fieldwork.

Both my purpose statement and the above mentioned questions are perspectives suited to an interpretive (social science) approach and an ethnographic tradition. Within the scope of available resources like time, money and knowledge, I will argue for my conviction that ethnography was the best tradition to follow when conducting my research.

Many authors define a qualitative approach by comparing it to a quantitative approach. Ragin (1987), has pointed out a key difference when saying, "quantitative researchers work with a few variables and many cases, whereas qualitative researchers rely on a few cases and many variables" (quoted in: Creswell 1998 p. 15-16).

An extended definition of qualitative research is given by Denzin and Lincoln (1994 p. 2):

"Qualitative research is multimethod in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials – case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactional, and visual texts – that describe routine and problematic moments and meaning in individuals' lives".

Not all definitions are as extensive as Denzin and Lincoln is, but there are many similarities in perspectives. Characteristics are listed by Creswell (1998 p. 16) to be:

“Natural setting as source of data; researcher as key instrument of data collection; data collected as words or pictures; outcome as process rather than product; analysis of data inductively, attention to particulars; and focus on participants’ perspectives, their meaning”.

Carrying out fieldwork, with all it implies, was a high motivator for me to complete my education with a Master degree. The possibility to live through a research process in a natural setting, and to use myself as a key instrument in gathering data, to be used later during the writing process, were important when choosing a qualitative approach. I found it to be an obvious and natural choice.

3.1.2 Ethnography

According to Patton (1980) qualitative methods are derived from the ethnographic tradition and field study traditions in anthropology (Franz Boas and Bronislaw Malinowski) and sociology (the Chicago School). Creswell (1998) sees ethnography as a description and interpretation of a cultural or social group or system (culture-sharing group). When conducting an ethnographic study you have to spend lot of time observing (participant observation), gathering documents and artefacts, interviewing members of the group, and study the meanings of behaviour, language and interaction. During the time in the field you record your information by using fieldnotes, interviews (recorder) and observational protocols.

An ethnographic tradition has earlier been used to study different topics within the field of education (Wolcott 1984), and several educators have strongly argued for the use of this tradition, because “it should show how education is linked with the economy, the political system, local social structure, and the belief system of the people served by the schools” (Ogbu 1981 p. 6).

Crapanzo (1986), in Clifford and Marcus (1986 p. 51) describe the ethnographer to be:

“...a little like Hermes: a messenger who, given methodologies for uncovering the masked, the latent, the unconscious, may even obtain his

message through stealth. He presents languages, cultures and societies in all their opacity, their foreignness, their meaninglessness; then like the magician, the hermeneut, Hermes himself, he clarifies the opaque, renders the foreign familiar, and gives meaning to the meaningless. He decodes the message. He interprets”.

The process of ethnography contains three stages. First you present a detailed *description* of the culture-sharing group, then you *analyse* your information, before you *interpret* the meanings of social interaction (Wolcott 1994). The result gives favourable prerequisites for the growth of a holistic understanding that seeks to view the actors and give the interpreter an understanding of social life in a social science perspective (Creswell 1998).

In order to perform ethnographic studies, you have to gather empirical evidence directly from the people in the culture you are studying, spending extensive time in the field (few months to years) and collecting a wide range of data using different tools of research. By doing this, you are in a position where you possess a vast amount of data that has to be sorted and categorised in a personal manner to help you present meaning in your analysis. To an ethnographic researcher, this implies being away from home and well-known surroundings. This is known as fieldwork. To many researchers it is a difficult task to live in an unfamiliar society, with unknown traditions, language, values, food, etc. Some find it pleasurable, while others find it tedious, frightening, or even to be a waste of time (Patton 1980).

Earlier in my education I have examined the rise of modern anthropology with Boas (1897), Malinowski (1922, 1935), Radcliffe-Brown (1935, 1952) and other ‘founders’ within the field of anthropology, and I have been in contact with other cultures during my travels. With this background and for epistemological reasons I am convinced that learning and speaking local languages, living in local environments, eating local food, learning local customs, etc., is a timeconsuming, adventurous, thorough, comprehensive and reflective approach, that gives me the profound backup I need to interpret the information I gathered during my stay in a foreign culture (in a ‘right’ and appropriate way). This knowledge will reflect how people, systems and society, coexist and interrelate (patterns of social relations).

The qualitative approach and the ethnographical tradition has become a part of how I am, think, and express myself when interacting with other people, especially when interacting with people from other cultures. Since my epistemological background and base are as such, it is fair to say that it has influenced how I have worked out the research design (purpose statement, research questions, use of methodology, theoretical framework, and development of analysis) for my study.

3.2 Research design

A research design is by Yin (1994) viewed as a plan of action. It is a plan that gives you a clear overview of your research. I will use what Creswell (1994) would call a *dominant - less dominant design*, and present my introduction; purpose statement; research methodology; theoretical framework; and the analysis from the framework of a qualitative approach.

I will first present my tools of research, before examining them more thoroughly in the next part.

In accordance with my purpose statement: *...focusing on the interaction...* I have used three different tools of research: *observations*, when sitting in the classrooms during the Basic course and the technical course: one-on-one standardised open-ended *interviews* with the learners, the facilitator at the Basic course, and the adult educational officer (NELP); and a *questionnaire* to all the participants in the technical courses.

Observation, or a degree of participant observation is one of the most important tools of research when studying other people (the culture-sharing group) in their natural setting. Much of the data from participant observations provided me with necessary information and insight for the development of the interview questions and the questionnaire (Pelto & Pelto 1996).

Another important tool of research is my *one-on-one standardised open ended interviews*. Interviewing the participants was a good opportunity to check and monitor my observations and interpretations, and a possibility to ask more about relevant

topics that revealed the participants understanding of opinions and believes in their lives (Kvale 1996).

The use of a *questionnaire* in this research was something I did not plan for, but it became a relevant option and later a reality when illness limited my possibility to complete the planed interviews. A questionnaire is not seen as a typical tool of research within a qualitative approach or an ethnographic tradition, but anthropologists often use it when they want to explore particular domains of cultural and social behaviour (Pelto & Pelto 1996). Given the choice of a qualitative approach I was then able to be flexible and adjust my research as needed.

I have also gathered policy documents, drafts of worksheets, handouts in class, evaluation forms, and pre-tests, had several informal conversations with learners, facilitators, coordinators, and others at the unit, made use of fieldnotes, magazines, radio and newspapers. During these searches, I have become aware of several processes: How reasoning and logic differs, how teaching approaches and understanding evolve, and how public and educational discourse develops.

Below I will examine participant observation, interviews and questionnaires since they are my main tools of research in this study, before a short narrative of my fieldwork will lead the way to relevant questions that concerns the validity and the reliability of my data.

3.3 Tools of research

3.3.1 Participant observations

“In order to understand the world ‘firsthand’, you must participate yourself rather than just observe people at a distance” (Silverman 2005 p. 45).

This is to me an acknowledgement of how I want to live and to do my research. But where do we draw the line for what participant observation is and is not, and to what degree do you have to participate in order to not only conduct observations?

Silverman (2005 p. 45) answers this question with defining participant observation as more than just a method, and he quotes Atkinson and Hammersley (1994):

“In a sense, *all* social research is a form of participant observation, because we cannot study the social world without being part of it. From this point of view, participant observation is not a particular research technique but a mode of being-in-the-world characteristic of research”.

Eriksen (1993), points out the goal of participant observation to be a combination of being inside (participation) and outside (observation) at the same time. Covert observation is another way of using observations, but within the field of anthropology it is seen as unethical. The people researched should have the possibility to decide themselves if they want to be an object of research – or not.

Time used in the field, participation and observation varies within a given study and across studies. This is something every ethnographer has to experience and then develop an understanding of how and what to do in order to put yourself in the best possible position in accordance with your study.

During my fieldwork, I lived and interacted with neighbours and others I met in my every day life. Within the classrooms during class, I did not participate in any way. I was a passive person sitting by myself and taking notes, but before and after class I always talked to the learners or the facilitators. At the Garment construction course, the facilitator encouraged me to participate, but I was uncertain about the use of time, and turned down the proposal.

In the beginning I found it essential to capture an overall view of the whole situation. This, combined with little experience of how to perform observations, made my scope broad, before I narrowed it down to focused observations and lastly to selected observation (Spradley 1990).

The observations in the classroom provided me with different data, like how the participants were talking to each other, how they were dressed, what the atmosphere was like, the size of the classroom, teaching methods used by the facilitators, etc. I wrote down all of my observations in a notebook and after every lesson I worked on my fieldnotes by specifying the various observations in order to recognise habits, patterns, etc. Later I developed categories like *usual* and *rare* observations, this in order to distinguish what was common and what was not.

The next important stage in the study was to transform the collected material into something more than small parts, mental pictures, incidents, stories, etc. Emerson, Fretz and Shaw (1995) examine several distinct practices (reading, coding, and memos) in the processing of fieldnotes. I combined my *reading* of fieldnotes with an analytical *coding*, and by doing this a new process started with identifying and formulating old and new ideas, thoughts, issues, etc. In this phase, themes and categories evolve, and the beginning of writing *memos* started.

Observations are a tool of research that all ethnographers (more or less) make use of. Another well-used tool of research within the ethnographic tradition, that crucial to my research, was the interview.

3.3.2 Interviews

The purpose of the qualitative research interview is to understand the world from the subjects point of view, to unfold the meaning of people's experiences, to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations (Kvale 1996), by listening to the interviewee make use of their own concepts and terms (Jacobs 1987). An interview is not a substitute for observation, but another tool of research to gather information. Observing thoughts, feelings and intentions, or earlier behaviour is quite difficult, or impossible, therefore it is necessary to make use of additional methods.

An interview is a conversation between two unequal partners, that has a structure and an agenda set by the interviewer. Therefore, it is the interviewer's task to make sure the quality of the interview is good.

Patton (1980 p. 197) describes three varieties in qualitative interviewing:

- *The informal conversational interview*
- *The general interview guide approach*
- *The standardised open-ended interview*

He distinguishes between the three variations by the extent to which the questioned are prepared. *The informal conversational interview* is loose in shape and questions are generated by the ongoing conversation. *The general interview guide approach* has a set of themes or topics that the interviewer wants the conversation to be about. It is a checklist with relevant issues that the researcher expects the interviewees to talk about. *The standardised open-ended interview* consists of a tight form, where every single interviewee will be asked the same well-prepared questions (followed by a well organised line). In such an interview you reduce the flexibility and spontaneity, but you gain data that are systematic, thorough, comparable and are therefore easier to administrate when entering back home.

During my time in the field I used the first and the third varieties. I used the former on several occasions, especially when visiting the unit or in the period before or after school. In my every day life I also used these varieties. When living in another culture you will often be in a situation where you lack information. To me, the fastest and the smartest way to gain it, is to spend time interacting with other people, through the use of an informal conversational interview.

A situation from my fieldwork:

Sitting on the pier with my sunburned feet in the water, consuming a split coconut to go, while conversing with an earlier Rastafarian about his heydays, does not give me information about what happens in a classroom at school. On the other hand, it may help me to understand how I should interpret a classroom observation or how I should behave and talk or formulate my sentences during my coming interviews.

When planning the interviews with the learners, the facilitators and the adult educational officer, I thought the general interview guide approach would suit my research best. However, I realised some time before my interviews that I felt insecure and became afraid of not doing it properly. For a period I considered other options, but I concluded it was better to gain some information by using a determined and standardised interview, than taking the risk of losing information by not succeeding in using the general interview guide.

Another argument was built from the experience of talking with the participants. When talking about school related matters I found it hard to hold a conversation going, especially with the learners. I therefore felt more confident using a determined and standardised interview. At one point I asked myself if it was necessary to do the interview one-on-one and it made me consider focus groups, or even written questionnaires. The learners had limited reading- and writing skills, but a fair understanding of the spoken language, so I found it best to choose a one-on-one oral presentation with the possibility for corrections and explanations.

I spent a lot of time preparing my questions, and I pilot tested them on a neighbouring girl before I started. I knew that her feedback would help me to reconsider questions and use more familiar words and formulations, which in turn would strengthen the quality of my interviews. In the first three or four interviews I was insecure and uneasy, but later I became more confident and I realised that many of my questions did not invite a conversation, but rather short and fast answers. After interviewing the learners I altered the questions for the facilitators, and found it to be an improvement. In my final interview with the AEO I felt I had improved my interview skills when being more relaxed, focused, and determined.

All of the interviews, except with the AEO (at the unit), were done in the hallway at school during class. I used a recorder and took notes during all my interviews and when returning back home, I transcribed them, spending endless time in front of the computer. I had to create a transcribing template, and I decided to write it as my respondents spoke. Doing this brought me back in time and I recognised the smiles, the smells, and even the participants' clothing.

In the analysis process of the interviews, I started to code my material, later I sorted it, before I organised it into concepts and categories that arose from the material. During this process I closely followed Robert S. Weiss' (1995) advice in *Learning from Strangers, The Art and Method of Qualitative Interview Studies*. He "guided" me through my data, by breaking it down into small parts and quotes, before building it up again (together with the analyses from the observations) by developing main categories, concepts and questions that made me able to find my way through an overwhelming amount of information.

3.3.3 Questionnaire

The difference between a questionnaire and an interview schedule is mainly how the respondents answer a question. In an interview, the respondents are free to answer what they want (see above) while with a questionnaire they have to fill in answers made by the investigator.

Judd, Smith and Kidder (1991) recognise three ways of gathering data with the use of a questionnaire: a written questionnaire, personal interviews and telephone interviews. Each of them has their advantages and disadvantages. Since my choice of a questionnaire is a written questionnaire, I do not find it relevant to elaborate on all of them, but only on my selected mode. The advantages listed are:

"Low cost, avoidance of potential interviewer bias, less pressure for immediate response on the subject, and a greater feeling of anonymity" (p. 215-216).

The disadvantages mentioned are:

"The quality of data (response rate and accuracy and completeness to questions), lack of control over question order, the inability to control the context of question answering and the presence of other people, illiteracy or other difficulties in reading or writing, and finally no possibility to correct misunderstandings or answer questions that respondent may have" (p. 216-218).

The use of this tool of research was not intended when doing my fieldwork, but it became a reality and an important tool, when circumstances changed my original plan. Pelto & Pelto (1996 p. 81) state:

“Where statistical analyses of material are secondary to the gathering of general descriptive information, questionnaires can be quite useful, and once the schedules have been prepared, very little time is sacrificed in administration”.

The procedure of outlining the questionnaire was to me time consuming and difficult, due to the unfamiliarity. But since I knew the specific content and had at an earlier stage made qualitative interview questions, it all became a question of operationalisation.

Before I handed out the questionnaire to all the participants of the technical courses, I had spoken to a coordinator who in turn had informed the facilitators about the coming questionnaire. I entered all the different courses one by one, and told the participants about my research and what I was asking them to do. When finishing the round, I entered the first classroom again to be available for questions and guidance if necessary, which could eliminate some of the above mentioned disadvantages, before they handed the questionnaire back to me.

Among all the 48 learners and the 5 facilitators present, I met very few problems. There was only one learner who had trouble understanding my questions, due to poor literary skills, and one facilitator who had difficulties in finding time during class. Asking the learners to stay behind after the class ended solved this. The rest of the participants, divided in five courses (Information Technology, Cake Making and Decorating, Electrical Installation, and two courses of Garment Construction), answered my questionnaire in a positive and accommodating way, and it was completed in less than an hour.

Most of the courses started and ended at the same time during the course of the year. All the learners and the facilitators contributing to my study have participated in an academic or a technical course for one or two months before answering my questions (interview) and questionnaire. Some technical courses on the other hand, had just started (Carpentry). I did not include these students, because I believed the participants had spent too little time together in order to establish knowledge or opinions about their interaction with each other.

3.4 Validity and Reliability

Among quantitative researchers, the two concepts of validity and reliability are considered important criteria when assessing the quality of the research. Judd et al. (1991 p. 51) defines the two concepts:

"The *reliability* of a measure is defined as the extent to which it is free from random error components. In turn, *validity* is the extent to which a measure reflects only the desired construct without contamination from other systematically varying constructs".

Qualitative researchers also find these concepts important, but they do not have a single position or consensus of the use of them. Some qualitative researchers (especially at an earlier stage) tried to copy the concepts and transfer them to a qualitative design, while others believed such an adoption to have no relevance. Instead they developed their own vocabulary better suited a qualitative research. Trustworthiness and authenticity are qualitative concepts with a viable stance according to validity and reliability.

From an anthropological point of view, Pelto & Pelto (1996 p. 33) refer validity to be:

"...the degree to which scientific observations actually measure or record what they purport to measure...and ...reliability is often closely related to the matter of validity; it refers to the repeatability, including interpersonal replicability, of scientific observations".

Validity is about truth and knowledge (Kvale 1996) and reliability is traditionally about replicability. But how is it possible to replicate a situation when humans have different pre-understandings, and when social contexts constantly change? How is it then possible to establish reliability?

Creswell (1998) summarizes several researchers from an ethnographic tradition and he mentions triangulation of data sources; feedback from informants or other researchers; and personal reflection, to be issues discussed as important in this matter.

Spindler and Spindler (1987) emphasise the need to be systematic when recording information (fieldnotes, tape recorder and camera), and seek to explain behaviour from the “native’s point of view”. They have also drawn up a list containing nine criteria for “good ethnography” (p. 18). I find these criteria to be present in my study, although the extent varies.

- Observations are contextualised.
- Hypotheses emerge in situations as the study goes on.
- Observation is prolonged and repetitive.
- Through interviews, observations, and other eliciting procedures, the native view of reality is obtained.
- Ethnographers elicit knowledge from informant-participants in a systematic fashion.
- Instruments, codes, schedules, questionnaire, agenda for interviews, and so forth are generated in situations as a result of inquiry.
- A transcultural, comparative perspective is frequently an unstated assumption.
- The ethnographer makes explicit what is implicit and tacit to informants.
- The ethnographer interviewer must not determine responses by the kind of questions asked.

In this research methodology chapter, I have argued for a combined methodology (this to increase the reliability and validity), where observations, interviews, and a questionnaire have been examined to seek convergence, complimentary and developmental perspectives (triangulation). Other eliciting procedures have also been acknowledged as important in the process of understanding the participants’ perspectives.

In many of my informal conversations with “ordinary” people and people working or studying within the education system, I have received not only a lot of information about education, students, people, systems and society, but also received directly or indirectly feedback on how to do things in another style in order to gain a better result. When looking back I find this information to be crucial to my study, because it helped me to evaluate and reconsider many of my choices made before and during fieldwork.

When meeting and talking with people from other cultures on a regular basis, the conversations may bring you to a place where you start to question already established truths in your study, or even more essential: in your life. These thoughts

of personal reflection have changed my focus several times during my fieldwork and analyses. I believe it has strengthened my research, and increased its trustworthiness and authenticity.

3.5 Challenges of fieldwork - What happened?

Soon after I had established myself in St. Lucia, I entered the public arena by walking and hanging around in streets, local rum shops, at corners, piers and popular shadow places. At all these “hangout” places I talked to people and started to gather information about everything I needed to live in the community. After some time the “tourist jumpers” backed off and I met others who had heard about me and were curious about my appearance.

At the same time I realized the dimensions of my original research project, and began a wide search around the field of education. Through this search I found different types of information that pointed to a new concept. At the same time I established contact with schools and the local library, which gave friendly assistance and advice. Through the library I located an educational statistical digest, St. Lucia (2002), which gave me all the statistical background material I needed regarding school enrollment, dropout rates, gender, population, structure of the education system, etc. I also found some interesting figures and numbers about NELP, which led to several informative conversations with a coordinator and an earlier facilitator in the town of Soufrière. This new information, together with an earlier interest for learning theories and adult education made me curious about NELP and their courses. Later, I went to their main office in the capital where I talked to a facilitator and a coordinator about my research and NELP.

An intense period of preparations followed, according to a possible new topic and a presentation at the National Enrichment and Learning Unit (NELU). Without any hesitation they gave me admission to all the courses whenever I wanted and the Unit assisted me when I asked for material and help. But the courses did not start when they were supposed to, and after continual delays I had to move from Soufrière to the capital Castries where I followed two level one courses. One Basic literacy course (English and Mathematics) and one technical course (Garment construction). At the

same time I spent long hours at the immigration office arguing for an extension of my stay. NELU provided me with a recommendation and together with my papers from the institute⁵ I finally succeeded in my task. When I moved to Castries, I had already spent much time in the area and I was familiar with both the city and the people.

I found myself sitting in the classroom and writing all that my senses observed. I was not sure what and how to do things at first, so I did too much and the lenses became rather blurry. Little by little my understanding improved. After every lesson I worked with my notes, and slowly I started to see habits and patterns, and later, questions presented themselves. This was a frustrating and exciting period, which prepared me for the coming interviews with the learners and the facilitators. At the same time as my stay in St. Lucia was nearing its end, the level of my knowledge about my subject matter was rising. I was putting the last polish on the interviews when I suddenly became a St. Lucian. Meaning, I got the “red eye”, which is an eye disease that is common for the St. Lucians. This prevented me from being out in public and I lost valuable time in the field. But my biggest concern was to bring the interviews to a close. I had been at the schools for a period of four weeks and the intention was to interview both classes (approximately 25 learners) and their facilitators by the end of my stay. Now I realized that I was in serious trouble and since the situation was far from ideal I had to improvise. Having made the decision to use a qualitative research design, this enabled me to be flexible and adjust in accordance to the situation. Therefore, I ended up making a questionnaire which I presented to all the learners (48 learners) and the facilitators (5 facilitators) of the technical courses, and at the end of my stay I managed to interview 5 of 8 regular learners at the Basic literacy course, the facilitator and the adult educational officer.

⁵ Institute for Educational Research, University of Oslo.

4 Describing pictures

4.1 "A learning situation"

The purpose of this study is to describe "a learning situation" at NELP, St. Lucia, with the main focus on the interaction between adult learners and facilitators. The interaction has been defined to be how learners and facilitators talk to each other and work together in order to learn and teach. I have followed two different courses at NELP, where one is a technical and the other is an academic course. The academic course was a combined Basic English and Mathematics course, and the technical course was a Garment construction course.

During my period of time observing these courses, I have gathered information about the interaction between learners and facilitators in "a learning situation". "A learning situation" is not only what happens when participants are at school, but also what they bring with them when entering the class. How they interact in the classroom can be observed, but why they do what they do when interacting is harder to understand.

"A learning situation" is not a definite setting or pattern with well-defined limits, but a dynamic phenomenon where the interaction between participants set one of the premises for learning and teaching. It is a construct containing a vast amount of information, and I am going to uncover what I found to be of relevance to my study by using observations, a questionnaire and interviews. Examples of some of the questions asked are:

- How are the classrooms organised?
- Do the learners help each other?
- Are the facilitators strict?
- Do the learners find the facilitators to be good teachers?

What I have recorded from the classroom is what I believe reflects the interaction between learners and facilitators. The information has been sorted and coded before being put into categories. I have developed three main categories and named them

prerequisites. I see these categories as important prerequisites in order to understand the interaction between the participants. The prerequisites I have emphasized are: Predetermined assumptions, Distractions, and Interaction.

Each condition is further divided into elements, which gives me a possibility to decode the information gathered through observations, the questionnaire and interviews. The elements of Predetermined assumptions are: Attitude and Motivation. The elements of Distractions are: Outside commitment, Teaching facilities and Disturbance. The elements of Interaction are: Interaction during class and Response to interaction.

These are all elements of "a learning situation" and together they form the foundation for learning and teaching at an adult learning course in St. Lucia.

4.2 Predetermined assumptions

Predetermined assumptions are what learners and facilitators believe and expect the substructure in "a learning situation" to be. These are norms and rules, which guide us to express a "correct" way to behave in specific situations (Knowles 1984). During my stay in St. Lucia I have gathered information, not only about the education system and NELP, but also about everyday life. I believe knowledge about, for instance, fishing and boats can be important if you are going to interpret the interaction between people, even more so if your study takes place in a culture different from your own. These are typical thoughts from an ethnographic tradition, since "they assume that certain aspects of human culture are central for understanding human life in all societies" and that "the various parts of a culture form a unified whole and that the various parts of cultures are interdependent such that change in one area will result in change in others" (Jacob 1987 p. 11).

Predetermined assumptions can, in concept, be the same in all societies, but the elements do not necessary mean or explain the same in Norway as they do in St. Lucia. The two elements I have emphasized in the Predetermined assumption condition are: Attitude and Motivation.

- The learners and facilitator's attitudes will always be seen through action in "a learning situation". I will describe episodes from my observations in the classroom to capture the attitude among the participants.
- What motivates a learner and a facilitator, and how can this be seen in the interaction in the classroom?

4.2.1 Attitude

"Thus, the performance that is affected by an attitude is the choice of a course of personal action" (Gagnè, Briggs and Wager 1992 p. 49).

Attitude is one of Gagnè, Briggs and Wager's (1992) five major categories of learning outcome (verbal information, intellectual skills, cognitive strategies, motor skills and attitudes) and they define attitude as a disposition or tendency to respond positively or negatively towards certain things like ideas, objects, persons, situations etc. Attitude was one of the first elements I took an interest in during my time in the classroom. In this chapter I will give examples from classes, which reflect the participants' attitude towards each other and their attitude to learn. Some of the examples given will be elaborated on by using my interviews, observations, the questionnaire and theory.

Authoritarian role - Where to look if not down?

A facilitator walks firmly around in a small airy classroom, with a red pen in her hand, while talking loud and clear. "You have to do it on your own, and my red pen shall only pass once" (Observation: A1). She is a strict and committed woman who has worked with adult education for 13 years. To my question about the red pen, she explains to me "My red pen signifies that I am in control at all time" (Interview: FA1). To me it did not only signify control, it was also a symbol of power.

During my time in the Basic course I focused on the interaction between the learners and the facilitator, and I witnessed a facilitator who looked down on the learners in a condescending way. Her attitude expressed a masterful facilitator who did not listen to the learner's wishes or needs in their interaction (Interview: L2), a facilitator who is superior to the learners in the classroom (Observation: A1-3, B1).

This was something I observed in the Garment course too, but only to some extent. The main difference between the two facilitators was how often they expressed this attitude. In the Garment course I observed this only a few times (Observation: C3), while it was more omni-present in the Basic course (Observation: A1-3, B1).

An example (Observation: A1): I entered the classroom and the learners looked at me with big eyes. The facilitator asked me where I would like to sit. I looked around in the small airy room and decided for a place on the side, with my back to the passage and a good view of the learners and facilitator. Then she started the lesson with no further explanation about my appearance. I was caught by surprise, and I asked her later if I could tell the class why I was watching everybody while taking notes. She looked at me with a surprised face. "Why on earth should I do that" she replied. I explained it to her once more, but she did not understand. All she said was: "They do not mind, it is not their business!" I disagreed and said that it was important for me to present myself on the ground of a voluntariness to participate in a research (Eriksen 1998). After the lesson and the coming lesson I managed to present myself by talking informally to the learners.

An attitude like this is not a new concept to adult learning. Lindeman, *The Meaning of Adult Education* stated as early as 1926 that: "Authoritative teaching, examinations which preclude original thinking, rigid pedagogical formulae - all these have no place in adult education..." (p. 10-11). Bruner has elaborated on this in *Towards a Theory of Instruction* (1968) and he describes this sort of attitude to be a result of a didactic process, which begins when a child enters school. He suggested that formalized instruction develops a sense of dependency instead of independency in the learner, which in turns limits a learner's possibility to become a self-sufficient problemsolver. In time, the child becomes an adult learner and s/he will bring with him/her expectations of being instructed by a teacher (Knowles 1984) who plays a didactic and often authoritarian role (Jarvis 1995).

This authoritarian attitude was one of my first main observations and I asked myself if this attitude would limit the learner's possibility to learn, or if it was a necessity in order to obtain control over the class. To answer these questions I asked the learners about the facilitator's strictness. What I found was an agreement among all learners

that being strict was important and good, and not being strict was definitively not good (Interview: L1-5). Further, to my surprise, two of the learners (Interview: L2-3) expressed that the facilitator was not strict, even though at one stage she repeatedly hit her pen on the desk in front of a learner who had trouble with managing her work (Observation: A2). "A facilitator has to be strict, if not, there would be major problems in class, because we would not understand what to do, or not pay attention at all" one learner replied (Interview: L1).

Since I, from the beginning, found this attitude to be unnecessary and very much exaggerated, I confronted the learners with the facilitator's favourite phrase, which was: "You are not listening, you have to follow instructions!" (Observation: A1). And interesting enough, all except for one of the learners (L2), had developed a causal explanation for themselves and interpreted the phrase as positive encouragement (Interview: L1, L3, L4).

After a month with observations, my presence at school and in the everyday life I began to see a structure of a society where two kinds of people lived separated, but woven together at the same time. I grouped and later called them: "hanging" and "heading somewhere". Within these two groups you will always find variations, but below I will give two examples of typical "hanging" and "heading somewhere" people.

"Hanging" is usually a man with no education, little or no formal work, with no money and an uncertain place to live or sleep. With a large network of people he constantly does small favours and tasks in return for some rum, a fish or some fruit to put on the family table (if any).

"Heading somewhere" is typically a modern woman who has broken the chain of tradition and fought her way from the kitchen and babies to an educated and well-paid job. You see them in their resolute walk and smart suit, with no time to loose. Between these two groups there was a difference in mentality, which I also found in the classroom at the Basic course. Most of the learners at this level were still in the "hanging" category and they expressed a subservient attitude towards a successful facilitator.

The unused dialogue

At the Garment course I also observed a strict and firm facilitator, but even if her instructions and comments were commanding or sourish, she managed to obtain a humoristic and ironic attitude. “It is suppose to mov’in, man!” she calls out (referring to the lack of movement of fabric), when a learner fails to complete a French seam (Observation: C1). When learners responded to instructions or comments from their facilitator I observed one of the major differences between the classes. A learner from the Garment class would respond with a smile and an understanding nod, while in the Basic class the learners would bend their head and stare at their books.

Since the attitude of communication between the facilitator and the learners was of such a distinctive character, I would argue that there was hardly any dialogue between them, only one-way communication. This made the learning situation impersonal, passive, sometimes unproductive, not supportive and perhaps even static. From the point of view of most of the researchers from all the learning traditions (even researchers from the behaviour tradition), would acknowledge that a good human and interpersonal climate would establish a positive learning atmosphere. Jarvis (1995 p. 150) render from Freire (1972) that: “At the outset of the teaching and learning, the teacher bridges the gulf between her and the learners in order to create a genuine dialogue...? Instead they played their role as an authoritarian person with passion and style. “Give me proper work!” (Observation: A2) and “Do not look at me, look at your paper!” (Observation: B1) are classic examples of their characteristic style.

This unused dialogue was to me an unused method, which limited their possibility to teach the learners and help themselves. But there was only one learner (L2) who questioned this attitude to communication. While he was trying to please her with sweet-talking and gesture, she responded with a patronizing voice: “Charming, do you understand, do you understand me Mr. Charming” (Interview: L2, Observation: A2). In my interview he told me: “Even if I am smiling, you know I am smiling for her, for her! I still do not manage to establish a desirable interaction” (Interview: L2).

The facilitators' empathy

After being present in the classroom for some weeks a new side of the facilitators appeared. Below I will give examples that they also showed empathy and were concerned about the learners, with an understanding of what is needed to become a good facilitator.

During my interview with the facilitator (Basic course) I asked her some questions about the training of the facilitators, the learners and then particularly the class I was observing. She told me that the facilitators had workshops before the courses started. One of the things they emphasized was how to deal with adults differently than with children. An adult has responsibility for him/herself and others. Adults differ specifically in self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, time perspective and orientation to learning, and children have few opportunities to make use of their own experience (Gagnè 1970, Knowles 1980, Rogers 1983 and others).

One concrete example of what they learned was: "Since they are adults you do not hit them. You do not force things upon them. And if some of them are misbehaving, you speak not harshly, but stern in that you are the person in front of the class and that they have to respect you, like we respect them" (Interview: FA1). Here she is speaking of mutual respect as one of the foundations which is needed when facilitating adult learners. Knowles (1984) acknowledged this and claimed that the instructor of adults must show deferential regard for the learner by acknowledging an adult learner's experience and creating a climate in the learning setting that conveys respect. People are more open to learning if they feel respected. If they feel they are being talked down to, patronized, or otherwise denigrated, their energy will be diverted from learning to dealing with these feelings. Knowles advises therefore facilitators to adopt a caring attitude.

The facilitator told me that before a new circle starts, all the participants at a course agree on some common rules. They are based on an understanding of how difficult and hard "a learning situation" can be to participants of an adult learning course when they combine school with job, family, friends, church, etc. What the facilitator emphasized was the importance "To strike a balance" when it came to expectancy to the course, disturbance, lack of concentration, absence, etc. She also pointed out

that such an agreement was meaningless unless there was a give and take from both sides (Interview: FA1).

An immanent attitude among learners

The learner's attitude towards cooperation can easily be observed in the classroom. Since the classroom is of such an intimate character, the learners have unique possibilities to work together. Often the facilitator encourages the learners to cooperate and in some specific situations she groups them herself (Observation: A2).

The communication among learners in the classroom often rested on where they were located. Some always sat together, while others sat alone. But since the classroom was small in size, they all easily managed to talk to the person next to them if they wanted. Some always addressed the same person, while others asked who ever responded.

Some of the older learners spoke Kwéyól and very little English, and some of the young learners did not speak much Kwéyól, but mostly English. This made the communication among learners and facilitator an extra challenge. In class, the facilitator always gave instructions in English, but when a learner had language problems, she sat down beside him/her and explained again in Kwéyól. The facilitator emphasized that she always tries as much as it is possible to do the facilitating in English, but in some cases she is forced to speak Kwéyól. She also stressed that learners have to respond in English. (Interview: FA1). This instructional problem is heavily debated among educators of language theory (Brock-Utne 2000, Obanya 1980, Holmarsdottir 2005, and others), and I find especially Klaus' (2001) understanding to be clear in this situation: "There appears to be general agreement that students learn better when they understand what the teacher is saying" (Holmarsdottir 2005, p. 319).

Most of the communication happened young to young, and elderly to elderly (Observation: A1). But, before and after the lesson I did not observe any limitations or communication problems caused by age differences. On the contrary, there was always a pleasant atmosphere where learners told stories, sold candy or processed food, or even showed their homework to fellow students. They were obliging, polite

and never (as I observed) talked negative of, or showed a patronizing attitude toward each other.

During my interview with the learners in the Basic course and in the questionnaire to the technical courses I asked the question: "Do you offer or receive help during class?" They all answered that they did to a certain extent. In the Basic course four out of five of the interviewed did both, while among all the 48 learners in the technical courses 77% offered and more than 87.5% received help (Questionnaire: L).

Gagnè, Briggs and Wager explain (1992 p. 48):

"... an individual with a strong attitude toward helping other people will offer help in many situations, whereas a person with a weaker attitude of this sort will tend to restrict offers of help to fewer situations".

When I asked the question in the Basic course, all the participants looked surprised. One of the learners answered like this: "Yes, because somebody can balance to you, something else. Like you can learn something from somebody faster" (Interview: L3). And this was exactly what the facilitator hoped to achieve when she put a fast learner together with a slow one. She explained to me: "Learners were comfortable with learning from each other, and therefore pick up faster" (Interview: FA1, Observation: A2). Peer tutoring as Topping (1992) calls it, or peer learning group as Brookfield (1986) calls it, has its advantages, since the learners have the possibility to experiment with ideas and to test possible interpretations in the company of other learners who are willing to listen in a non-judgemental way. Lindeman (1926) emphasized the creation of discussion groups within peer groups to be suited to adult education because it allows the learners to reflect over their own experiences.

When I observed this collaboration I got the impression of an obvious and natural action. I found this to be a good example of an immanent attitude to help each other, since no one expressed themselves negatively and instead helped others as best they could. This is the very opposite of what Knowles (1984) has describe as the problem of collaborativeness among adults, with conditioning (competition) in their earlier school experience.

During class (Basic course) I also observed episodes affected by a negative attitude, but they were clearly in the minority (Observation: A1, B1). In the technical courses I asked the facilitators if they had similar negative attitudes among their learners, and all of them claimed it was a positive learning atmosphere in their class, where learners easily followed instructions (Questionnaire: FA).

4.2.2 Motivation

Where do different motives originate and develop within a person and under what conditions does it mobilize? These are questions asked by many researchers about motivation. Motivation is an important concept in most theories of learning. "It is a drive directed to meet a need or achieving an intention, those factors that energise and direct behavioural patterns organised around a goal" (Rogers, A 2002 p. 95). You can divide motivation in two, where intrinsic motivation refers to motivation to engage in an activity for its own sake. In contrast, an extrinsic motivation is motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end (Pintrich and Schunk 2002).

Motivation of human behaviour is such a large and complex subject that I am only going to examine very few researchers in light of how the participants of the courses communicated and cooperated in "a learning situation". Later, I will turn to feedback and reinforcement as factors of motivation.

Weiner (1990) points out that behavioural theories tend to focus on extrinsic motivation (i.e., rewards) while cognitive theories deal with intrinsic motivation (i.e., goals). In the humanist tradition, motivation to learn is also seen as intrinsic, when it emanates from the learner himself. One of the well-known theories developed by Maslow (1970) proposes a theory of human motivation based on a hierarchy of needs. Going from basic/primitive needs like hunger and thirst to safety, we continue with love and belonging, self-esteem, and finally self-actualisation, which is a desire to know and to understand what a person is capable of becoming.

Bandura (1977), a distinctive researcher within the social learning tradition, believes that learning by observing (observational learning) involves four separate processes where motivation and attention are two, and retention and reproduction are the others. He does not explain motivation, but he claims that to imitate behaviour a

person must have some incentives (motivation) that s/he envisions, and that these incentives act as reinforcement.

Facilitator's motivation

I have observed a facilitator who repeated a topic or a calculation over and over again. She spent a lot of time going through earlier explained material by using different learning methods. Still, learners often failed their work when asked to perform a task⁶. This is an episode from a class which demonstrates how dedicated a facilitator has to be to accomplish a Basic course at this level (Observation: A3):

A new test is coming up, and this time it is English. Before they start the facilitator hands out a picture and explains to them how and what to do. Underneath the picture there are different words, and they are supposed to circle the word that corresponds to the picture.

A situation from the classroom

"Everybody understand"?

"Yes miss".

She repeats to them three times. After 10-15 minutes the facilitator observes a learner (L5) who is circling the picture instead of the word. She stops the test to explain once more and this time she uses the board to visualize it.

"Have you all understood what to do?"

"Yes miss".

"L5, can you explain to me what to do?"

"And she does".

This example expresses a calm and patient facilitator with a desire to see her students correctly complete the task. I asked her about this and similar episodes during class, because I believed this would tell me something about her motivation. She said it was a challenge now and then, but she liked being a teacher.

"It gives me a sense of satisfaction that I can help somebody, give back some of what I have been given...it is just to know that I came up to the system and I was fortunate to go through and then I can give back the little I know to those who are less fortunate" (Interview: FA1).

⁶ This example is only meant to illustrate the facilitators' patience and dedication. Relevant factors as basis knowledge, language, hearing and sight, etc. are not the scope here.

I followed up the question and asked her and the other facilitators at the technical courses if they felt enriched by teaching, and they all replied yes (Interview: FA1, Questionnaire: L).

In my interview with the adult education officer at NELP, he confirmed that most of the facilitators at the unit did not become a facilitator because of the money or the prestige. Instead they had a commitment and an interest in teaching and in the community as a whole (Interview: AEO). In view of the two parts of motivation, we can see that the facilitators express an intrinsic motivation where satisfaction, enrichment, commitment, and interest in teaching and the community are the most important. Their motivation has its origin in personal growth and development (Rogers 1983), esteem and self-actualisation (Maslow's hierarchy of needs).

Learner's motivation

Most of the learners at the Basic course are eager to learn. They really try to focus and concentrate, but often they do not manage to do so and they fail to understand. They are dropouts, leftovers and elderly people with bad eyesight and hearing that make learning difficult and unpleasant, while sitting on a chair for hours. But still, they do not give up. What makes them continue?

During my interviews with the learners I tried to grasp their motivations to sign up for this course. Most of them were strong and clear about their reasons, while some were vague and not sure. The learners who expressed a strong reason were those who were job-motivated or read-a-book motivated (Interview: L1-L4). The ones (Interview: L5) who were vaguer expressed a humanitarian concern (care-motivated). What they all had in common was their wish to take a step in a new direction where personal growth and development would put them in a better position in the future (Rogers 1983). There was especially one learner who was very conscious about developing himself. He told me the reason to sign up for this course was: "to open up my brain a little more" (Interview: L3). I also asked the learners if they were interested in continuing on in school after this course, and they all smiled and said they wanted to go to the next level or take another course (Interview: L1-5).

Below I will present two episodes (“dancing” and “flash of insight”) that gave me the possibility to see how authentic emotions in “a learning situation” can be a catalyst for motivation to a learner:

“Dancing”

“He turns around and gives us a great smiling face. He has done it right and he will not let go of the moment. So, he starts to dance in front of the class and say aloud to everybody: It is no problem! We all start to laugh. He has obviously done his homework this time, because he has never volunteered, or done it right before” (Observation: A2).

“Flash of insight”

“One of the learners tries and tries, but she does not manage...after a while another facilitator enters the room and sits beside her all the time. She explains the steps one more time in Kwéyól and they practice together. Suddenly she manages, and her toothless smile and rubber face explodes in happiness, while her books and pencil flies in the air. From this point she does all the calculations and has hardly any mistakes” (Observation: A2).

Not only is this an example of what motivates a learner, it is also a good example of Kohler’s (1925) theory “A flash of insight”.

Feedback/ reinforcement

I discussed in chapter two how especially the behaviourist made use of feedback (response) and reinforcement to explain learning. Feedback is information given back to a learner as a response, while reinforcement affects the tendency of a response to happen again.

Feedback can be positive (praise), negative (critique) or neutral (no information). Reinforcement is either positive (you add a stimulus) or negative (you remove a stimulus). Feedback is almost always considered external while reinforcement can be external or intrinsic (Skinner 1971, Pavlov 1927, Hull 1943 and Thorndike 1928). What we know is that adult learners respond well to and need reinforcement. They prefer to know how their effort measures up when compared with the objectives of the instructional program. Positive feedback may be seen as the key to motivate adult learners and to help them through negative experiences.

When I asked the participants of the Basic course about feedback, none of the learners understood what I was talking about. Only when I reformulated my question, some of them managed to understand what I meant. L1 told me that the facilitator gave him praising words and told him that he was good (Interview: L1). On the other hand, since the facilitator expressed herself with calling out: "Give me proper work!" many of the learners did not receive the motivation they hoped for. At the Garment course I often observed the facilitator encouraging the learners with nice feedback as:

"You are good to sew, now I can have a new pair of trousers at Christmas" she jokes (Observation: C1).

4.3 Distractions

"The right environment is necessary, if not a learned behaviour can not be performed" (Bandura 1986).

Distractions are learning environment prerequisites that take place during the courses. Distractions are here seen as an external condition that potentially negatively influences learners and facilitators in their interaction. Since people react differently to factors such as sound (noise level), arrangement of the room, time of day, etc., I find it relevant to outline what I find to be the three most prominent elements in "a learning situation" at NELP. All of these elements will alone or together affect how the participants communicate and cooperate. The elements I have emphasized are: outside commitment, teaching facilities and disturbance.

4.3.1 Outside commitment

One of the major problems with signing up for an adult course is the fact that you are doing something extra in your everyday life. Many adults will find it difficult to give preference to an already packed and stressed everyday. They all have commitments and tasks that in many cases have to be done after or before entering an adult learning course. I observed several episodes during my time in the classroom where outside commitment influenced their capabilities to learn.

Time after time the facilitator repeated that doing homework is the key to progress "You have to enjoy the weekend and do your spellings. You know it is spellings on Mondays? You have to put on your thinking cap" (Observation: B1). Some of the

learners have more obligations to family members and church than others, and these obligations are hard to combine with school.

One of the learners responded like this when I asked him about homework:

“Yeah, but my problem is when we have spellings to do, I do not have the time to do them, because I am working every single day. I am working Monday to Friday, Saturday I may do something for my mother and Sunday I have church (Interview: L2).

The facilitator is aware of how difficult it is to perform well when for instance they bring with them their domestic problems to school. “All we can do is to talk about it and do our best” (Interview: FA1).

Attention - Mind present, or not?

Since outside commitment has a great influence on “a learning situation”, I asked the facilitators from both academic and technical courses if the learners were paying enough attention in class.

Facilitators from the technical courses thought learners were paying enough attention (Questionnaire: FA), while the facilitator of the Basic course responded:

“Well, being an adult coming from work, those who have to see after their house, those who have their household, those who have little ones, you find among these people coming from work, like myself, you have to run to class, so your attention span will never be there. Being a facilitator coming from work 0800 to 1630 and coming to teach your attention span will not be there. You just have to cope and be patient, and they will a kind of... they may tell you Miss I am tired, but then I tell them that all of us are. So we strike a balance there too” (Interview: FA1).

Attention is not only a major topic of study in psychology, but also important in the field of learning. To Bandura (1977) learning is impossible if the observer does not pay attention to what is happening around him. Gaining students’ attention is to Gagnè (1970) the first step in a successful instruction.

I have mentioned several factors that take time away from school and make it difficult to obtain focus and follow instructions in class. I confronted a learner with a particular episode in class and he responded:

“It happened to me because my mind was not in focus, like I was lost...and when I go to class; I am from work, right? And sometimes I am not relaxed” (Interview: L3).

4.3.2 Teaching facilities

Teaching facilities is to me what Knowles (1984) regard as physical environment in his climate setting. The teaching facilities at academic and technical courses are not too different. The content of the classrooms are not the same, but nearly all arrangements backing up the courses are built up on the same premises: A Garment course is located in Clothing and Textile room, an IT course is located in a computer room, etc.

Below I will describe two classrooms (Basic course and Garment course) and the facilitator's use of different material when facilitating learning. How do the teaching facilities affect the facilitating of learning?

Spatial map Basic course

The classroom is 4 x 3 m. It has two windows (with a fan between) with no glass and it is facing the road outside. It looks like it has been one regular size classroom (Norwegian standard), but they have divided it in two with two large mobile walls. Opposite the windowless opening there is an indoor passage from where you can look into all the classrooms (since the wall facing the passage was only one meter high) on that floor, only by walking some few steps. On the last wall you have a blackboard with the necessary equipment such as chalk, a sponge and sometimes a pointer. The mobile wall in the back and the blackboard in front of the classroom are decorated with useful information like numbers, weekday's, multiplication tables and large notes with “food for thought”.

Only three or four of the learner's tables are facing the blackboard, all the rest (eleven in all) are more or less in a sideways position. In the ceiling they have two long fluorescent lights, which give enough light in the classroom. The school (Canon Laurie Anglican primary school) is a small (Norwegian standard) green concrete building with two floors, which shows signs of wear and tear. But compared with other buildings in the area it does not stick out.

Spatial map Garment construction

This room is a large classroom (10x5 m), which was originally a Clothing and Textile classroom. It is divided in two with large boards and a medium cupboard. In front of these boards the facilitator has her desk and lockers with equipment (clothing, buttons, scissors, etc.). On the other side you find the blackboard, and at the two other walls you find open windows and open brick walls. Nearly all over the classroom you find pictures of design, textile, mirrors, ironing table etc. In the room there are four large tables with a minimum of two sewing machines and four learners at each. Most of the sewing machines are old and have the brand Singer. The school is Castries Comprehensive Secondary School, and it is the largest school in St. Lucia. It has approximately 800 students recruited from the area in and around the capital.

Material

In the beginning of the courses the facilitators hand out a compendium and when they find it necessary they supplement the syllabus with papers to hand in, and pictures to encourage individual thoughts (Observation: C1, Observation: B1, Interview: FA1). Most of this supplementary material was for instance, pictures from the every day life and therefore very familiar for the learners. This approach has some of the feature from Rogers, A (1999 p. 223) "The real 'literacies' approach", where he tries to teach the learners: "by using the activities which they are already undertaking or which they wish to do in their own lives".

The adult educational officer emphasized that it was their philosophy to bring the extra expenses to a minimum for the ones entering a course. The learners should only bring a composition book and a pencil. In addition, at the technical courses, they often needed some personal equipment like a screwdriver or a personal kit bag for sewing.

4.3.3 Disturbance

I realised early that disturbance to me was something else than disturbance to the participants of the courses. Therefore it was important to clarify whether they recognized or disclaimed disturbance to be a distraction to learning.

The question I asked myself was: Is laughter, talking together, dancing, coming late, use of mobile phone, noise from nearby constructions, etc. seen as a disturbance to the participants?

One of my deepest concerns when observing, was to curb my senses and not be disturbed by the actions that surrounded the premises, especially since the school was physically open and surveyable. Sometimes during my observations, I had problems hearing how and what the learners and the facilitator were talking about, because of the (unfamiliar) noises outside and inside of the classroom (Observation: B1). But most times I noticed a one-way communication. When learners were interacting in pairs or when the facilitator teaches a learner one on one, I found it difficult to follow their interaction. But if the facilitator was talking when walking around or standing in front of the class, I managed to understand what they communicated.

At the Basic course I experienced a group of learners who easily lost their concentration and started to do things that were not related to the subject (Observation: A 2). Once, the smell of processed food from the street outside the school was enough to break up the class (Observation: A3). Another time, sounds from the street (cars, animals, bikes, people, etc.) or from other classrooms made it difficult to be a good learner and focus on the work at hand (Observation: B1). In the technical courses I thought the premise for learning was better, since the school was located in an area with less noise. The classrooms had actually doors and each class had a whole classroom for themselves. As a result of this luxury I found it much easier to follow and to understand the interaction in the classroom.

After two weeks of observations, I understood that the noise I was absorbing was a part of the premises and I had to learn how to handle it. I asked all the learners in both the technical courses and the Basic course about different noises coming from in and outside the school. They responded as expected, that it was hardly any

disturbance during class (Questionnaire: L, Interview: L1-5), while the facilitators were more modest and acknowledged a certain level of noise. But they were also of the opinion that there would always be disturbances in adult learning classes at this level (Interview: FA1).

There was only one learner who believed that any kind of disturbance during class was a distraction to learning. All the rest did not find external or internal noise to be a distraction in their learning situation.

4.4 Interaction

In this part of the analysis I will focus on three main approaches to teaching (didactic, Socratic and facilitative) and see how they coincide with NELP's philosophy and practice during "a learning situation" at a National Enrichment and Learning Program in St. Lucia. This I will do through the use of examples from my observations, interviews, the questionnaire and theory.

4.4.1 Three approaches to teaching

The three approaches to teaching I am going to examine are: didactic, Socratic and facilitative. With a didactic approach the teacher explains in detail what is to be taught to the learner, while in the Socratic approach the teacher asks discerning questions which "leads" the learners towards a conclusion. In a facilitative approach the teachers do not seek to control the outcome of the learning, only the conditions under which learning may occur.

These three types of teaching are inherently different approaches. Where the first two (didactic and Socratic) are seen as teacher-centred methods, the last (facilitative) is a student-centred method. In a student-centred method a learner has the possibility to make up his or her own perception of reality, while in the teacher-centred (didactic and partly a Socratic) method you adopt the teacher's perspective. A learner will then tend to reproduce a facilitator's ideas and beliefs, and they will not have the capacity for critical reflection (Brookfield 1986).

When adopting an already established perspective you also transmit what the elite have selected to be the important information (Bourdieu & Passeron 2000), not only within a subject, but also within a culture. From this point of view Freire (1972) has developed his liberation theory and argued that by excluding the learners from a process of free individual thought, they lose their possibility to become independent learners and people. They become oppressed and imprisoned in a cultural construction of a false reality. Freire regards education as “the practice of freedom”, from where learners should have the possibility to discover themselves and then act as active participants, not only in the classroom, but also in the world.

Jarvis (1995) points out that reproduction of the status quo (a result of didactic teaching) is not solely a negative aspect within education because it can serve as a good foundation and be a motivator to continue learning, especially if the learners are encouraged to analyse what has been transmitted.

Within a teacher-centred method you may find several approaches to teaching and Jarvis (1995) has elaborated on them in *Adult & Continuing Education*: the demonstration, guided discussion, controlled discussion, lecture discussion, lecture, mentoring and the tutorial.

The Socratic approach is, as mentioned, a teacher-centred method that incorporates questioning in the interaction between a learner and a teacher. The teacher asks adequate questions in a logical order, which help a learner to answer what s/he “knows” without having crystallised it before. This method puts the learner in a very active position, where s/he makes use of his or her own stored knowledge and experience. But since the teacher “leads” the learner through a process, s/he will transfer their expression of knowledge from themselves to the learner, and in turn the learner only reproduces knowledge and does not develop new knowledge.

The last approach I will examine is facilitative teaching. Since this approach is the one NELP regards as their own, I will elaborate more on this method than the others. I will first focus on one of the leading educators within facilitating learning (Brookfield) and outline his six principles of effective practice in facilitating learning, before I turn back to the student-centred method.

Through his six principles, Brookfield shows us how the teaching focus should be in a favourable direction for the learner (1986 p. 9-10):

- Participation in learning is voluntary. Adults engage in learning as a result of their own volition. It may be that the circumstances prompting this learning are external to the learner (job loss, divorce, bereavement), but the decision to learn is the learners. Thus we can exclude those settings in which adults are coerced, bullied, or intimidated into learning.
- Effective practice is characterised by a respect among participants for each other's self worth. Educators must not engage in or seek to cultivate an environment in which behaviours, statements and practices take place that belittle or abuse others. This does not mean that criticism should be absent from educational encounters. It does mean that special attention has to be given to questions of self worth.
- Facilitation is collaborative. Facilitators and learners are engaged in a co-operative enterprise in which, at different times and for different purposes, leadership and facilitation roles will be assumed by different group members.
- Practice is placed at the heart of effective facilitation. Learners and facilitators are involved in a continual process of activity, collaborative analysis of activity, further reflection and collaborative analysis and so on.
- Facilitation aims to foster in adults a spirit of critical reflection. Through educational encounters, learners come to appreciate that values, beliefs, behaviours and ideologies are culturally transmitted and that they are provisional and relative.
- The aim of facilitation is the nurturing of self directed, empowered adults. Such adults will see themselves as proactive, initiating individuals engaged in a continuous recreation of their personal relationships, work worlds, and social circumstances rather than as reactive individuals, buffeted by uncontrollable forces of circumstance.

All of these principles have played an important role in the development of adult education. Educators have later focused on specific principles and developed them further, in the same way as Brookfield has used work from Rogers (1969) and Knowles (1990) to develop his six principles of facilitation.

In a student-centred method a teacher is a facilitator of learning who controls the environment and not the learning outcome (Rogers 1983). Jarvis (1995) divides this approach in two parts, as student-centred group methods and individual student-

centred methods. Both of them contain a range of different methods, of which I am going to present only those that are frequently used and are significant to my analyses.

Student-centred group methods: brainstorming, debate, group discussion, interview, listening and observing, projects and case studies.

Individual student-centred methods: assignments, contract learning, experimental learning, personalised systems of instruction, practicals, personal tutorial and self-directed learning.

4.4.2 Interaction during class

During my time in class I got to know many of the above-mentioned teaching methods. At the time, I found it difficult to classify and group the different methods used by the facilitators because they seldom followed the approach of facilitative teaching. I did not confront the facilitators or the Adult Education Officer with their “disloyalty”, but rather I asked questions about how and why the learners worked together and how the facilitators and the learners collaborated.

The facilitator in the Basic course responded by telling me about two different methods they often used in class. She called them teacher-learner and learner-learner. Many of the learners sat together in pairs and they organised themselves to work in groups. It was only on special occasions the facilitator moved a fast learner across the room to help a slower learner (Observation: A2, B1). The learner-learner method was often used when a facilitator failed to explain to a learner, then she would use a fast learner to do it instead (Interview: FA1).

The other method she referred to was teacher-learner. With teacher-learner she meant teaching a learner individually by sitting beside him/her to explain and practice over and over again. This was something the facilitator often used to follow up after having explained a task to the whole class. She also made use of their mother tongue if necessary.

The interaction between the learners and the facilitators in the Basic course and the Garment course was not too different. They both used teacher-centred and student-centred methods combined in their teaching. Below I will give one example from each course on how the facilitators taught the learners. These examples may be seen as prototypes of teaching approaches in their respective courses, but none of them contain all the methods the facilitators used during the courses.

The facilitator in the Basic course stands in front of the class and explains to the learners a method to do calculations (demonstration). With use of the board she draws a picture, and tells the learners to make four groups inside the picture. After that, she draws 2 lines within the 4 groups, and then they count aloud 1, 2, etc (controlled discussion). The answer is 8. After having repeated this method three or four times with different numbers, she wants the learners to practice themselves or together with other learners (group discussion), while the facilitator walks around in the classroom. Some manage, while others are not even close (Observation: A).

Since the facilitator practiced a mix of frontal (lecture) vs. individual teaching (personal tutorial), I asked the learners about what they preferred. Half of them did prefer to be taught individually, while the other half preferred or managed with frontal teaching. Some of the learners thought it was nice to have the possibility to combine the two methods when they found it to be necessary (Interview: L1-5).

In the Garment construction course they used few, but functional methods suited for a practical course (practicals). The facilitator gathered all learners around one sewing machine and she explained orally while showing what to do (demonstration). The learners observed and some took notes, while others again asked questions (listening and observing). Before the learners went back to their sewing machines to practice, the facilitator wanted a learner to repeat what they had learned. After this introduction, the facilitator started to mingle and give advice, guidance and feedback like: "That is the right concept, but it is too big" (Observation: C1).

When a learner had forgotten a seam or had problems with her sewing machine or fabric, the facilitator addressed the class and said: "We need help, can somebody tell us what to do?" During my time in the class, one or two always responded at once.

Sometimes a learner may face a classic problem, and when that happens the facilitator gathers all the learners and she explains what has gone wrong, why and how to fix it (Observation: C2).

In the Basic course I also observed how essential repetition was to the learners, and the facilitator practiced repetition all the time. At every lesson she constantly repeated earlier topics and checked the learner's homework (assignments), before she went any further with new topics. Most of the learners thought it was okay with repetition, some found it to be boring, but there was only one who believed "the facilitator spent too much time on the slower ones" (Interview: L1).

In the class, there was a gap of knowledge between the learners which complicated the progress in class. There was constantly a shift in teaching level where the facilitator had to correct her focus. One of the things she did was to give the fast learners extra work, and when they were finished she corrected their work independently of the other learners (personalized system of instruction).

4.4.3 Response to interaction

Every now and then the facilitator in the Basic course left the classroom to talk to other facilitators in the passage, or to give a helping hand to another class. This was a method they often used if they needed an extra facilitator in a class. My first reaction was: Is this necessary?

But after having seen them do it over a period of time I found it to be both a positive and a negative action. A positive one because the learners had the possibility to have a task explained from another facilitator (Observation: A3, Interview: L5) and the facilitators had the opportunity to help each other with correcting papers or small tests during class. At first sight I believed this was a functional and a well-adopted way of working where both parts gained from it, but later I observed "lack of communication episodes⁷" which may have been caused by an absent facilitator.

The learners found the explained task to be very difficult and I was not sure if everybody knew what to do. Shortly after her explanation the facilitator left the

⁷ Learners left alone in the classroom and for some reason they do not know what to do.

classroom and during a period of 20 minutes very little productive work had been done. When the facilitator re-enters the classroom she had to start over again with her explanations (Observation: B1).

Another time, the learners were left alone in the classroom with no idea what to do, not because the facilitator had not told them, but because they said they had understood when they did not (Observation: A1, A2, A3, B1). This, episode I called “the counting story” and on a later occasion I confronted both the learners and the facilitator with this particular episode. It happened during a repetition of last week’s mathematics lesson. They were supposed to count with 2, 5 and 10. Meaning 2, 4, 6, etc. and 5, 10, 15, etc. The facilitator gave them two numbers in every series, and the learners should fill in the missing numbers. After having given the task the facilitator left the classroom and did not enter until fifteen minutes later. Then she observed that some of the learners were counting with wrong numbers.

I asked the facilitator how the learners became confused about what to do, but she responded that she did not know and that she had to go over it again and take it slowly and soon they will pick it up (Interview: FA1). The learners on the other hand responded with several unexpected answers. Some said: “It was an important number to know”! One other was not sure, “But it happened because his mind was not in focus, like he was lost” (Interview: L3). A third thought it was because they did not know how to do it with the numbers told, and therefore picked another number instead (Interview: L4).

Episodes like this happened, but none of the learners seemed to care about it. Actually, most of the learners in the Basic course meant the facilitator was a good facilitator, because she spent enough time on teaching and explaining things to them (Interview: L1, L3-5). They describe her as a nice and patient facilitator, with good human qualities. She gives them praising compliments (Observation: A1) and reflects an understanding for their situation, and therefore “strikes a balance” (Interview: FA1). They emphasize her innumerable methods to achieve a good communication, including her use of the mother tongue. There was only one learner who was not impressed by her teaching. I asked him what he did when he did not understand her explanations, and he answered:

“I call her and let her know that I do not understand, and then she is telling me that I do not understand, because I make a joke about everything she is trying to do. She can explain to me once, two times, three times and I still do not understand, she tells me I will not understand” (Interview: L2).

The same learner complained about not being followed up. He says: “She does not remember my homework. She does not know what I do” (Interview: L2).

In the technical courses all the learners thought the facilitators were good teachers, because they found no difficulties in following the instructions. But, the learners found the interaction with the facilitator to be of a greater importance than the interaction with other learners in the learning situation (Questionnaire: L). The facilitators thought it was important and therefore encouraged the learners to work together, while they actually believed that doing the task themselves was the best way to learn (Questionnaire: FA).

4.5 Summary of analyses

Predetermined assumptions

To understand predetermined assumptions (here: attitude and motivation) you have to have knowledge about, and a possibility to develop an understanding of the conditions the inhabitants live under. You have to look at their historical background, language, politics, economy, demography, labour market, etc. You have to spend enough time being and living in the environment until you have discovered the unwritten and the unspoken. To grasp something not physical is a difficult task and without doubt a challenge. To be clear about one thing: I am not in any position to assert that I have decoded a society by spending three months in a foreign culture. But, this said, I would like to believe that much of the information I have gathered about the society, education system and NELP has made it possible for me to describe “a learning situation” in terms of the interaction between the participants of an adult learning course.

Attitude

I have followed an adult learning course in St. Lucia and I have experienced a split facilitator playing with two different hats (the empathic and the authoritarian

facilitator). In the beginning of my observations I experienced the facilitator to be more authoritarian than I did later. At one point my view changed from thinking she exaggerated her role as a teacher, to see her express comprehensibility for the learners. But still, it was something about her unpredictable style that made me uncomfortable. In my interview with the learners they were all clear that a strict facilitator was important, and most of them believed her to respond to their expectations.

An observation from the everyday life has given me an interesting piece of information that I find to be relevant when describing the attitude among the learners and the facilitator: The earlier mentioned difference in mentality among the inhabitants. There is no doubt that this difference in mentality creates large distances in perspectives of values and attitudes in the society. For this reason, it would be naive to believe that these perspectives would not influence "a learning situation".

Following the thoughts from the didactic teaching tradition I found in the classroom an authoritarian teacher with use of teacher-centred methods (demonstrations, controlled discussion and lecture) to transmit knowledge and dependency (Freire 1972). This tradition is not the tradition NELP has build their philosophy on, but as the adult educational officer responded: "theory is nice to have and grasp towards, but practice is much more difficult" (Interview: AEO).

Jarvis (1995) argues that there exists an uphill battle against adult learners expectations of how teacher's interaction should be when acquiring new knowledge, while the facilitator is coping with the difference in mentality in a classroom where a climate setting (Knowles 1984) might not satisfy what "a learning situation" requires.

Motivation

Motivation is the second of two predetermined assumptions in this thesis. Motivation may be seen as both extrinsic and intrinsic, where the latest is rooted in the drive for doing something because you simply enjoy doing it. An extrinsic motivation is motivation to engage in an activity as a means to an end. From these definitions it is likely to believe that intrinsic motivation can promote learning and achievement better than extrinsic motivation can, and it does (Pintrich and Schunk 2002).

Among the learners in the basic course I found an eager class where all of them expressed an intrinsic motivation to learn. I arranged the learners in categories and named them: read-a-book motivated, job motivated and care motivated. I observed several episodes where learners pushed the facilitator's patience, but the facilitator still managed to focus and give room to authentic emotions. Coming from inner delight, I have interpreted these happenings to be a catalyst to a learner's motivation. This is what I would call the bright side of "a learning situation", but sadly it has another side that most likely does not motivate the learners. The Basic course facilitators' way of expressing feedback is colored by the character the facilitator is playing and it becomes very demanding when the facilitator call out her instructions.

Distractions

Distractions are to me external prerequisites, which negatively influence the interaction in class. Some of the distractions outlined are more fundamental than others. Many elements have their origin in the participants' obligations in their daily life (work, family, church, etc.), which in many cases hinder them from paying attention during class. To Bandura and Gagnè, attention is crucial in learning and instruction. Without a learners attention it would be difficult for a teacher to teach anything. Other examples of distractions concern the location of the schools and how the classrooms were arranged (Knowles 1984).

The last external condition I focused on was disturbance. Having two classes within one classroom divided by a mobile wall was noisy. Among the learners within the class and not to mention the noise coming from outside the building was to me a major source of disturbance. But, here it is important to stress that none of the participants thought this was a nuisance to anybody, even when I observed the opposite.

Interaction

With the examination of three different approaches to teaching (didactic, Socratic and facilitative) I maintain that I have made it easier to understand the premises for the interaction between the participants in "a learning situation" at St. Lucia. By looking at the approaches to teaching, and their respective methods (teacher-centred and

student-centred), I have demonstrated, with use of my observations, interviews and the questionnaire, that there is a gap between NELP's theoretical point of view and their practice.

Interaction during class

In both the Basic course and the Garment course, the facilitators use a mix of teacher-centred methods, individual student-centred methods and student-centred group methods. But, within these methods you find different alternative approaches suited different courses, I have followed one academic course and one technical course. Even though the facilitators from both the courses mixed their use of teacher-centred methods and student-centred methods they seldom used the same mixture.

The Basic course made use of methods like: demonstrations, lecture, controlled discussion, group discussion, assignments, personalized system of instruction, and personal tutorial. While the Garment course used: demonstrations, practicals, listening and observing.

This is not meant to be an exhaustive list of all the teaching methods the facilitators make use of during class, but rather examples of how the facilitators shift between different teaching methods when teaching.

Response to interaction

From the Basic course I have given examples of how "lack of communication episodes" may influence the learner's possibility to learn, but none of them seemed to be affected by it. There was only one learner who complained about the facilitators teaching and her ability to follow up the learners. All the rest meant she was a nice, patient and good facilitator with good human qualities.

Both my observations and findings from the questionnaire of the technical courses tell me that the learners and the facilitators communicate well and find no difficulties in following the instruction. But the findings point out a divergent view about the interaction in "a learning situation". Here, the learners prefer to be taught by a facilitator standing in front of the class, while the facilitators believe the learners learn best when doing the task themselves.

5 Outcome

5.1 Introduction

The main objective of this study was to describe "a learning situation" by focusing on the interaction between the participants in an adult learning course in St. Lucia. I have earlier defined "*a learning situation*" to be: Predetermined assumptions; Distractions and Interaction; and *interaction* to be a reciprocal action where learners and facilitators talk to each other and work together in order to learn and teach.

My three principal research questions have functioned as points of light during the processing of the material. When answering these questions I mainly rely on the already examined theories of adult learning and teaching approaches (didactic, Socratic and facilitative), my observations, interviews and the questionnaire.

My research questions will present themselves in the following subsections, but first I will refresh the strategies of instruction written in the comprehensive document: *Adult and Continuing Education in St. Lucia: Addressing Global Transformation and The New Millennium (1999)*, and present an extract from my interview (concerning these issues) with the Adult Educational Officer for the Ministry of Education, Human Resource Development, Youth & Sports.

Various proposed strategies for delivery of instruction in the program consist of:

- Face-to-face instruction
- Simulation exercises, scenarios and interactive engagements (learner-centred approaches)
- Attachments – field placement (learning by doing)
- Distance teaching (radio and TV)
- Print and electronic media
- The UNESCO Documentation Centre as a major repository of audio-visual material

These strategies of instruction are only proposed instructional strategies. Since I have observed only two adult educational courses at two of eleven centres on the island, I cannot certify the use of all proposed strategies. However, I have observed

facilitators practice face-to-face instruction, various learner-centred and teacher-centred approaches, and practicing learning by doing with the learner's experiences as a starting point for effective learning.

During the interview with the Adult Educational Officer I asked if the facilitators have implemented learning by doing and learners-centred approaches in class (as outlined in the NELP guide). He responded:

“...especially when it relates to the technical areas, where we deal with a lot of projects, we minimise the amount of theory and just talk, and people do things. We evaluate people, especially on the basis of what you have done. Physically how well you sew that dress, how well you made that cabinet, how well you set up that thing. That is what we emphasise in. Seventy five percent of the marks we give are for your projects, how well you have learned, how well you have done it. And it is only 25% for little theory and so. So you will notice that somebody can still pass the test by not doing the theory at all. Because the emphasis is not so much, we are not trying to minimise the importance of theory, but at that level at that time our concern is to teach people to do things rather than know about things. When you go to the university you read and do your research and you concern yourself with these things, but in our program we think it is different, we do things”.

After this answer I found it necessary to ask closer about what lies behind the NELP initiative, and I mentioned the five learning orientations: behaviourist, cognitive, humanist, social learning and constructivism.

“I think it is a combination between the last ones: Cognitive, humanist and Social learning. We can not, I do not think we identify ourselves with only one, it is very difficult to do that, but we try to incorporate these aspects into our programs”.

Earlier in the interview when we were talking about the facilitators I asked what kind of teachers become a facilitator?

“Well, when we choose somebody, it is a good teacher, that has a commitment and interest in the program as a whole and in the community. We also expect the person to be a likeable person, a patient person, a person who understands the great difference between young persons and the child and the adult, as it relates to learning. A person who is willing to listen, willing to help, that is why we do not call them teachers, we call them facilitators. We are hoping that they would just facilitate the learning. Many of the people who come to these classes have a wealth of

knowledge. It is not like the child who comes with very little. As what we do is to assist in the particular area”.

These answers give me additional information to understand better what the comprehensive document is about. In the coming section I am going to answer my three research questions, before I tend to some concluding thoughts.

5.2 Research Questions

5.2.1 Are the teaching approaches stimulating, or unproductive?

Do the learners find the approaches used by the facilitators stimulating, or unproductive? What kind of approaches do the learners prefer and how have they arrived at this position?

Most of the learners in both the technical and the academic courses found the facilitators to be good. In the former they believed so because the learners did not have any problems in following the instruction, and in the latter the learners found the facilitator to have empathy, to be nice, good (strict) and patient, and managed to explain to them what to learn. There were very few learners from any of the courses who believed the facilitators did not succeed as a facilitator.

After finishing my interviews and completing the questionnaire at the end of my fieldwork, I realized that the learners did not distinguish between the facilitator as a person and the teaching approaches. If they found the facilitator to be nice, they believed the approaches to be good, and if she was not good, the approaches were bad. From a St. Lucian learner's point of view, I find this reasoning to be logical and the question is: why should it not be so?

Although most of the learners thought the facilitators and their teaching approaches were good, very few learners managed to give me a specified or exact answer of what kind of approaches they preferred. Some learners liked to be taught individually, others became nervous and preferred collective teaching. Some hated homework, others liked to work in pairs, while most of them preferred the approaches the facilitators were using at the time.

I observed different teaching approaches in the two courses. I find this logical as they represent an academic course and a technical course. All the facilitators in both courses made use of a mix of teacher-centred and student-centred methods. I believe this mix of methods to be a result of a longer period of “trial and error” within the philosophical and conceptual framework, combined with a determined level of knowledge among the learners and the facilitators.

During my fieldwork, I discovered a difference in mentality (explained in “*Authoritarian role - Where to look if not down?*” in the analyses chapter) among the inhabitants of Soufriere and Castries, a difference that affected the attitude between the learners and the facilitator in the classroom. I believe this subservient attitude to be inherent, with the consequences that very few will ask critical questions about alternative teaching approaches for obvious reasons. Rather they have accepted the established conditions, and may not know of alternative teaching approaches.

Among the participants of the courses, I found an intrinsic motivation to teach and learn. Many of the episodes I observed during classes are still fresh in my mind. Episodes, like “dancing” and “flash of insight” (described in “*Learner’s motivation*” in the analyses chapter) represent feelings that motivate oneself and others, while an attitude like “an authoritarian style” represent a teaching approach that most likely does not motivate the learners.

The last part of my first research question: “What kind of approaches do the learners prefer *and how have they arrived at this position*”? proved difficult to answer. I believe it would have required more profound and closer contact with the participants in the courses than I managed during my fieldwork. If I had spent a longer period of time in the field, with a higher frequency of interaction with the participants in the courses, the chances for answering this question would have been better. But, when looking at the power structure in the society and among the inhabitants and within the families, I believe you would find the same pattern in any classroom. The structures of power outside the classroom are reproduced inside it, and because people generally prefer the familiar over the unknown, they settle for the way things are.

5.2.2 Is the interaction a positive experience?

Is the interaction in the classroom a positive experience for the participants? How do the learners and the facilitators interact in the learning situation?

Nearly all the learners in the courses believed the interaction with the facilitators to be a positive experience, except for one learner (L2) in the academic course who made it clear that he did not appreciate the interaction with the facilitator as a teacher or as a person. Many of the learners had difficulties in attending the courses for different reasons, but almost none of the reasons were because of a negative interaction with the facilitators.

When observing the participants in the basic course, I witnessed several episodes where the facilitator looked down on the learners in a condescending way, and I interpreted this interaction to be a negative experience. Another observation I have interpreted negatively is the unused dialogue. I have seen that most of the interaction between the participants happened through one-way communication, where the facilitators explained everything in detail to the learners. I did not find this to be a student-centred method, where a teacher is a facilitator of learning who controls only the environment, and not the learning outcome (Rogers 1983). This is an approach that is neither built on dialogue nor on interaction (since I have defined interaction to be a reciprocal action), and it can be recognised as a teacher-centred method that does not coincide with a facilitative approach.

The didactic approach is often spoken of in a negative way, but according to Jarvis (1995) this approach may function as a good foundation and a motivator to continuing learning.

During my interviews, I confronted the learners with my observations about the authoritarian facilitator, but none of them had interpreted these observations in the same manner as I had. I believe this discrepancy of perspectives to be evidence of a person (me) who stands outside the society with the “wrong” attitude and looks in. With a “wrong” attitude I mean: not an inherent attitude (also called: predetermined assumption), which is deemed as necessary to fully understand the interaction between the learners and the facilitators in a learning situation.

In the technical courses I found the learners and the facilitator to have a divergent view on the interaction in the classroom. The learners thought the interaction with the facilitator to be of greater importance than the interaction with other learners. The facilitators, on the other hand, encouraged the learners to work together, but the facilitators believed doing a task alone was the best way to learn (Questionnaire).

After observing a technical course in progress, I saw how the learners picked up much faster when the facilitator taught them, but I also saw how important it was to have the possibility to work together with other learners. All the participants in the technical courses had a positive response and attitude towards each other, and to the methods used for instruction during class (Questionnaire).

In the basic course the facilitator sometimes grouped a fast learner with a slow learner, but most of the time the learners worked together whenever they wanted. This interaction was highly developed and I have interpreted it to be a positive supplement during class and not a disturbing factor.

Different kinds of disturbances were one of the three external prerequisites that I thought negatively influenced the learners and the facilitator in their interaction. I realized fast that my definition of disturbance was different from the participant's. Therefore, none of the learners were of the same opinion as me, and nearly all the facilitators accepted and acknowledged a certain level of noise, because from experience they had found it best "to strike a balance". Together with outside commitments and teaching facilities, I found the external prerequisites (to learning and teaching) to be "better" the longer I stayed. With "better" I mean that I at one point accepted and understood the external prerequisites to be an available evil.

5.2.3 Is there a discrepancy between the participants?

Is there a discrepancy between what the facilitator communicates and how learners perceive it?

During my fieldwork in St. Lucia I sought out people in the neighbourhood, streets, piers, local rum shops, etc. when wandering around in the city. I established a small core of informants that gave me answers to my curious questions about everyday life. I also established contact and had several informal conversations with an earlier facilitator and a coordinator outside the unit. At the unit, which I visited twice a week, I talked to another coordinator who helped me with different practical things.

When I was at the schools I arrived early and after the lessons were finished, I stayed behind in case I could strike up a conversation with some of the participants. All in all, I spent three months in St. Lucia and nearly six weeks (twice a week) observing the interaction between the learners and the facilitators, and still I find it hard to answer my last research question.

When I worked out this question, I had just read about symbolic interactionism, and I was fascinated by the thought of Blumer's (1969) three fundamental premises, and how they may have influenced the learners and the facilitators in creating different life worlds. In my point of view it did not matter if they had a different fundamental view of life or not, because I believed this position to be a suitable starting point when observing the participants in "a learning situation".

When comparing the courses I see a difference in instruction, focus and concentration among the learners. In the garment course I found participants interacting as if they acknowledged each other in a different way than in the Basic course. There (in the Basic course) the learners and the facilitators more often talked past each other or misunderstood each other. I observed several episodes where learners did not know what to do and ended up doing nothing else than disturbing the other learners.

I found the learners in the garment course to be more contributing and sympathetic towards each other, the facilitator and to the course in general. They expressed a positive attitude and an eager desire to learn. In the Basic course I experienced the opposite, the participants acted less respectful and honest toward each other.

Trying to explain these differences, I first looked at the content of the courses. I found that the academic course at first level was the most difficult one for several reasons, both for the learners and for the facilitators. Academic courses were considered much more demanding and difficult than practical courses. And the learners belonged to different social strata. The learners attending the academic courses were usually considered less resourceful than learners at many of the other courses, in that they lacked basic skills needed for full attendance in a modern society. So learners with few resources are matched with a demanding subject. In addition, the facilitator represents the kind of knowledge that the learners lack, and therefore represents the part of society these learners do not have access to. This difference would put the participants at different levels of communication. Since the learners lack basic skills, we can perhaps assume that their previous classroom experiences have not been positive. The learning situation is therefore a reminder of something they have not mastered before, and the facilitators' teaching methods reinforces instead of breaks this position. For the facilitator too, this is a challenge, because of the initially different social levels. They have to facilitate "children's courses" for adults, with respect and tact. All this together puts a lot of pressure in the learning situation.

In the practical courses, the matter is a different one. There is less pressure for the learners, because they are learning a new practical skill that they are interested in. If they had not liked sewing, they would not be there. The difference between the facilitators and the learners is not necessarily a big one. A facilitator at cake making and decorating could for example be attending a garment course.

I have realized that to understand such fundamental issues you have to spend much time over a longer period and perhaps live even closer to the participants than I did. Maybe I should have worked as an extra teacher during the academic course, or maybe I should have answered yes, when the facilitator at the Garment course

offered me a place in front of the sewing machine. What I know is that both of these suggestions would have put me in another position, which in turn may have brought my research in a new direction.

5.3 Concluding thoughts

I was in St. Lucia for a period of three months, and for six weeks I observed, interviewed and distributed a questionnaire to the learners and the facilitators in an academic course and several technical courses at NELP. In addition, I examined NELP's philosophical and conceptual framework. To understand this material better, I also examined a large amount of learning- and adult learning theories, and several teaching/instructional theories, developed by researchers from different professions.

I argue that there is a discrepancy between NELP's theory and practice, in light of the above-mentioned material. A facilitative teaching approach that NELP claims to exercise contains more principles than they manage to fulfil and their practice contains several aspects that fit better with another approach than their original teaching approach.

I have earlier (in the Interaction section) outlined Brookfield's (1986) theory on facilitating learning. Now I will make use of his six principles of effective practice in facilitating learning as a backdrop to highlight and point out the suggested discrepancy. Here it is important to stress that with use of elements (theories) from another educator like Rogers, C (1983), the comparison of theory and NELP's practice, would have been highlighted different even thou they represent the same orientation of learning theories (Humanist orientation).

- *Participation in learning is voluntary.*

When an adult learner signs up for a course, it is correct to say that s/he has done it of free will, and the reasons to do so will differ from person to person. The courses at NELP are open to all, but it has a cost both in time and money. To many people this "price" is too high, while to others it is a motivational factor. I have experienced learners and facilitators with an intrinsic motivation to teach and learn, and I have interpreted this to be an indicator of *voluntariness* in teaching and learning.

- *Effective practice is characterized by a respect among participants for each other's self-worth.*

An adult learner expects to be treated as an adult, and not as a child. This is something NELP has recognized and therefore integrated *mutual respect* as an important aspect in their program. My experience from classes differs between an authoritarian facilitator who looks down on the learners in a condescending way and an empathic facilitator who expressed comprehensibility. This characteristic and unpredictable style is recognized in a didactic teaching approach, not in a facilitative one. Knowles (1984) acknowledge this and advises the facilitators to adopt a caring attitude.

- *Facilitation is collaborative*

At several levels in class I found the *collaborative* to be missing. After every circle (6 months) the learners had the possibility to evaluate the courses, but in the meantime there was no dialogue (between the participants) to adjust objectives, curriculum, and teaching approaches.

During classes (Basic and Garment) I observed an immanent attitude among the learners to help each other. This was obviously an integrated method, which functioned well; therefore I found it sad when the facilitator (in the Basic course) practiced one-way communication. This unused dialogue emerged as a limitation in the facilitator's way to teach and the learners' possibility to learn. At the Garment course the collaborative was more present.

- *Practice is placed at the heart of effective facilitation.*

Practice is an alternating and continuous engagement by teachers and learners in exploration, action, and reflection. In the Basic and Garment courses, they made use of practice where the learners worked with and on explained material. In the Garment course I saw more often how learners and facilitator reflected upon activities and collaborative analysis, while in the Basic course I observed learners who needed more following up and positive feedback than they received.

- *Facilitation aims to foster in adults a spirit of critical reflection.*

Through educational encounters learners have the possibility to critically develop and understand how values, behaviour, beliefs, and ideologies appear in a culture. I have observed facilitators transmitting knowledge and solutions where no *critical reflection* has materialised in the learners. From the classroom I have no observations that support this principle.

- *The aim of facilitation is the nurturing of self-directed, empowered adults.*

The ultimate goal to adult learners is to be proactive, instead of reactive. In the Garment course I observed learners that participated in a practice that obligated them to become self-directed and empowered adults. At the Basic course the conditions did not encourage the learners to become self-directed and empowered, only to adopt the facilitators' knowledge.

With use of Brookfield's six principles I have showed that NELP does not follow one approach of teaching, but rather two, combined together. I believe this combination has more elements from a didactic approach than a facilitative approach. I also believe that this combination has emerged for mainly two reasons: NELP's fundamental thoughts and the facilitators experience and knowledge, melted into a pragmatic approach as a practice of a common denominator.

Through my observations I have interpreted NELP and the facilitators to draw thoughts and ideas from different theories of teaching and learning. I do not believe this to be a rarity, but rather a common practice, because of the complexity that surrounds many adult learning courses.

Even though I think NELP does not manage to carry out their fundamental thoughts into practice, I believe they have gone far in establishing their programs to fit local conditions in a rapidly changing world. NELP has proved to be an updated, flexible, and qualified program, restructured to fit a learning paradigm in terms of form and content, with focus on multiple literacies⁸, IT, and an extensive use of cooperation

⁸ How to bridge the gap between basic and functional literacy.

with the local industry. I think participating in NELP's adult education courses prepares and qualifies the learners to a more labour-demanding market in St. Lucia.

How NELP meet their challenges, depends not only what they decide in St. Lucia, but on what initiatives the region finds important. In my point of view there are several areas that could be strengthened, both in their practice of instruction and at the administrative level. First, I believe the facilitators should be more willing to interact in a reciprocal way with the learners, and meet the learners' premises in the classroom. This could be done by evening the power balance among the participants by recognition of Creole (indigenous) knowledge, language⁹ and character. Second, the facilitators must be more true to NELP's philosophical and conceptual framework. Third, more people must be given the opportunity to participate at courses provided by NELP. An initiative here could be to repay the cost of the course after passed exam. Fourth, NELP should be approved (by the people and the politicians) as a good way of re-entering the education system. Fifth, the status of adult education has to be lifted and acknowledged by the society to be equal to other levels of education. This can be done by raising NELP's examination papers up to a standardised level. Sixth, the Caribbean countries must cooperate and coordinate their activities better than today. Lastly, I believe St. Lucia and many other small states in the region will have benefited from a much more developed distance learning program synchronized by a superior coordinator like the University of the West Indies.

⁹ Kwèyòl.

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APPENDIX Coding

	Basic Course Canon Laurie Anglican Primary School	Technical Course Castries Comprehensive Secondary School	NELP National Enrichment and Learning Program
Observations			
Mathematics	A1 (15.10.03) A2 (29.10.03) A3 (05.11.03)		
English	B1 (27.10.03)		
Garment		C1 (28.10.03) C2 (30.10.03) C3 (06.11.03)	
Questionnaire			
Facilitators		FA (11.11.03) <i>M & F</i>	
Learners		L (11.11.03) <i>M & F</i>	
Interviews			
Facilitators	FA1 (12.11.03) <i>F A</i>		
Learners	L1 (10.11.03) <i>M Y</i> L2 (10.11.03) <i>M Y</i> L3 (10.11.03) <i>M A</i> L4 (10.11.03) <i>M A</i> L5 (12.11.03) <i>F A</i>		
Adult Education Officer			AEO (13.11.03) <i>M A</i>

M= male

F= female

Y= young (up to 19 years)

A= adult (20 years and up)

